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Converting Web Site Home Buyers to First Contacts

By Catherine Franz

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According the National Association of Realtors(R) ("NAR") surveys completed between 1999 and 2003, 66 percent of all home buyers stick with the first real estate agent they contact. The number one reason stated was that buyers perceive all real estate agents to be the same. This means that two out of every three contacts that you receive when you are the first contact, you are most likely to get the business.

There are two major items that get in the way of this not happening. First, if you don't show them how you are different from the other realtors and if you don't have a formalized conversion system.

The NAR news is good news if you are the first contact. But what do you do if you aren't? What can you do is a more accurately way of asking? Agents know there is a wide difference between experience and competence. This doesn't really matter though, agents main target isn't selling to other agents.

The key is to create a marketing process that pushes you in front of the line of other realtors.

The 2003 NAR report stated that 71 percent of buyers use the Internet to gather information on buying a home yet only 6 percent use the Internet to find an agent. This means that 65 percent of the people visiting realty-type web sites and just there for information. The 2003 numbers are an

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increase from 41 percent and 3 percent in 2002. Keeping at this same growth rate, the 2004 prediction would be 91 percent and 9 percent.

The Internet is the fifth method to find agents. The first four are: referrals, repeat business, met agent at open house or office walk-in. The fifth with the Internet were yard signs. The least effective at 1% were advertising trinkets and direct mail.

What type of Internet presence do you need in order to be first contact -- or part of the nine percent in 2004? With

the Internet ever evolving trying to keep up creates a throw-up-the-arms frustration at times if you're not techie savvy or paying for someone else handing the site.

There are four major keys for staying present and being in the this nine percent:

1. Automatic database system
2. An informative, interacting, and evolving web site
3. Technology support for leveraging time
4. Newsletters, printed or e-delivered.

I don't need to remind you that buyers are getting savvier every year with the Internet and with home buying. And due to this they will test your knowledge level during your first contact to see if you have what it takes to save them money, time and headaches. The latter, headaches, being number one.

Just recently I called four real estate agent companies and asked them one question out of the yellow pages and it was amazing what I discovered and the way I was treated. One agent took my name and number, promised to call back, and never returned my call until the next day with kids and dogs screaming in the background. It took me seven more tries to find an agent that could answer the one question correctly (the way NAR said it needs to be answered). Out of 12, 8 answered incorrectly, and four of them you could tell were "winging" the answer.

What are you doing to make yourself different?

Communication skills need to be a big consideration. There are three major Internet communication items that make the

determination of whether they are going to contact you or pass you up for another web site.

1. Clear communication and instructions on the web site. This happens most of the time through linking. You ask visitors to click here but all they have is an underline on the word. Say "click here for." The other item is that what are they going to get or find if they click there? Is it perfectly clear. Where are they going to go if they click there? Is the link taking them to another site, another page? The why, why do they need to go there, why do you want them to go there. What is their benefit for clicking there.

2. Ease of use. Is the navigational system of the site easy to use for visitors. Some people are very visual and by giving them an overall view of what they can find --

either in words or in a diagram eases their comfort level. The more comfortable they feel at the web site, the more comfortable they are going to be taking the call to actions you have designed on the site. Create Step 1, 2, and 3s to handhold them through a process.

3. Provide details. Again, something similar to what I said in #1. Be clear, give details on what will happen if, where they will go next, or what they can expect to get or know by this. Remove the scariness of unknown quantities and expectations. Lead visitors through your site. Give them a handshake and don't let their hand go and walk them through all the processes they came to accomplish. How are you different than other agents -- spell it out with details.

Visitors navigating directly = Higher conversions

By Wildfire Marketing Group Content Development Team

A study was recently released showing that visitors navigating directly to a web site resulted in almost twice the conversion ratio of those using search engines to arrive there (4.23% compared to 2.3%). Internet traffic generated from other sources such as text links or online advertising converted at less than 1% (.96%).

To make the best use of this information as business owners let's start with how visitors can navigate

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directly to a web site — there are really only two ways: By typing your web site address into the address bar of their browser By using a bookmark that they have previously saved In order for someone to arrive at your web site in one of these two ways, they will have to be reached through some other means first, such as face-to-face sales calls, networking, direct mail postcards or some other form of marketing. Therefore, be sure to include your URL on all of your marketing materials, stationary and company literature. There is something more tangible about being able to hold a brochure, business card or postcard in your hand and type the address into your browser. It creates a higher degree of trust by showing that you really are more than just a web site.

Now we'll look at the lower converting traffic from search engines, links and online advertising. Although it will offer a lower conversion ratio when compared to visitors navigating directly to your web site, it's still a valuable resource and can also serve as the first contact that someone has with your company so that their next return can be through direct navigation. You should include a mix of SEO and online advertising to improve the effectiveness of your overall marketing campaign.

Wildfire Marketing Group is an

specializing in helping businesses like

yours to compete against larger companies and win! If you're ready for your business to grow like wildfire, give us a call.



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