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7 Measures of Web Site Success

Drive more traffic, engage your visitors, and convert more prospects online. A few key changes can make your Web site a business driver.

BY MICHAEL RUSSER



So many real estate Web sites stop short of achieving their full business-producing potential. There are a number of reasons why these sites aren't working as well as they could be, from not offering the right type of targeted content to having a confusion design that leaves the user wondering where to click first.

Here are some tips to help assess the strength of your Web site and then improve it.

7 Measures of Success for Your Web Site

It's not just about driving traffic. Driving traffic to your site is relatively easy. However, getting visitors to engage and convert into serious clients is not. In fact, there are seven

major qualities that your site needs before it can have a fully productive online presence.

1. Targeting and Branding

How well is your site targeted to your market? How does your Web site differentiate itself in your specific niche market? Very few real estate Web sites are targeted. In their attempt to “speak to everyone,” they end up talking to no one.

Consider: How can you change your Web site to better target your market niche?

2. Design

Just because a site is beautiful doesn't mean it'll be effective. Just ask any practitioner who's spent thousands of dollars on a “beautiful” site only to see it not produce a dime of new business. Design must take into account many factors, including functionality and consistency with your target market and branding.

Consider: Is your site all flash, no substance?

3. Copy and Content

The primary purpose of the copy and content on your Web site should be to engage the visitor and effectively answer the question “What's in it for me?” for your prospects and customers. Yet it has been my experience that most real estate Web copy fails completely in this respect. You must provide the articles and resources that your audience is truly interested in, and write compelling headlines to help them understand what resources you're providing.

Consider: What content can you provide on your site that your target market needs?

4. Interactivity and the Ability to Engage

Information — even great information — is still not enough. Your content needs to be engineered to maximize engagement via irresistible offers.

Consider: What offers can you have on your Web site to engage your visitors and make them want to visit?

5. Navigation

Ease of use and consistency are the hallmarks of good Web site navigation. Is it easy to find your listings, your contact information, and the other pertinent information your Web visitors would be looking for at your Web site?

Consider: How can you make your Web site easier to navigate?

6. Internet-Empowered Consumer Friendliness

Visitors to your site likely value their privacy. Reassurances of privacy throughout your site as well as explicitly not requiring consumers to reveal who they are when they complete a form are crucial. It will make your visitors feel safe and secure when using your site. (Read: [Privacy Matters](#) and [Turn Your Web Forms Into Business Generators](#))

Consider: How does your Web site protect your visitors' privacy?

7. Promotion and Tracking

How your site is promoted depends upon its target market focus. Keep in mind that some target markets will not use search engines to find your site. How can you promote your Web site so prospects will land there? What information can you provide to lure them there in the first place?

Also, don't forget to frequently track how well your site is performing. For example, to track users' behavior at your Web site, try [CrazyEgg](#), which provides "heat maps" of your site pages so you can see where people are most clicking.

Consider: How can you promote your Web site to your target audience? How will you track it to see what functions your Web site is performing well and not so well?

Conclusion: Make a Plan Before You Refine

Don't bother calling a Web designer just yet. Even the most gifted designer cannot make an effective Web site that scores high in all of the above categories until you give them your written plan and vision for how the site will dominate your particular niche. Think of it this way: 90 percent planning, 10 percent building and execution.

To get inspiration for your site, here are several Web sites that score high on the above mentioned assessment:

- [DowntownLivingMiami.com](#)
- [ChevyChaseLiving.com](#)
- [FortStill.GoArmyHomes.com](#)
- [IntownLivingAtlanta.com](#)
- [SellingCantonHomes.com](#)
- [MilitaryMove.ca](#)
- [GotDreamNeedHome.com](#)

Each of the above sites are highly targeted and required three to six months of intense planning before the owners even spoke to a Web designer.

So to improve your site's performance, start with determining the weaknesses of your Web site; then you can take a very well thought-out and committed action to correct each of those weaknesses, one at a time.