

Attract attention, attract business

Part 2: Agent's guide to online success

BY [BERNICE ROSS](#), FRIDAY, MAY 2, 2008.

[Inman News](#)

(This is Part 2 of a three-part series. Read Part 1, "[Specialization's the name of the game](#)," and Part 3, "[Become resource for all things home ownership](#).")

Does your Web site have the "wow" factor? If not, here's how to get it.

Last week's article looked at the number one reason that agents fail miserably online: They fail to create a specific target market. Another reason that agent Web sites fail to produce results is that they lack the "wow" factor. If you want to create a "wow" experience for your Web users, follow the steps below from Michael Russer, the author of [Online Dominance](#).

Once you have established what your niche will be, the next question to ask is, "Do my Web visitors immediately know that my Web site is the perfect fit for them?" In most cases, agents have their pictures on their home page and some information about the area. This is what everyone does. If you're doing what everyone else does, you don't stand out. The result is that there's no reason for your Web visitors to come back to your page or to tell others about you.

To have online success, you must answer the most important question that Web visitors ask: "What's in it for me?" Russer's approach to discovering this important information is to put yourself in your Web visitor's shoes. To achieve this goal, you must shift from being in a sales role (i.e. focused on what you want to achieve) to being focused on marketing, which is identifying and fulfilling what the customer wants. For example, if you are serving a first-time-buyer niche, ask yourself as well as those around you: "What are the primary concerns that first-time buyers have? What are their greatest fears? What do they need to know to close a successful sale? What types of information do they want about the neighborhood? What other needs do they have?"

Russer points to Linda Jefferson's Web site, [GoArmyHomes.com](#), as an excellent example of this type of Web site. The moment a Web site visitor views Linda's site, it's clear that she has niched her business for Army families. She understands their special needs and provides solutions. She also goes beyond providing real estate information; her site provides useful information about their community as well as a place to network with other Army families. If an Army family is buying or selling in Linda's area, she is the clear choice to represent them.

Russer says that you can achieve great results by taking as little as 20 minutes to brainstorm with a group of others who have experience with your niche. Don't try to do this alone. When you do a brainstorming session, every idea is a good idea. Be complimentary. Avoid criticizing any idea during the brainstorming session because that will shut down the flow. Wait until the group leaves before evaluating the ideas. Next, sort through the information to determine what themes, concerns and ideas came up repeatedly. These are the key issues your Web site must address.

The next step is to choose your brand. Avoid using your name because people have trouble recalling names. A strong brand says what you do, whom you do it with, and where you do it. For example, [AustinProbateSellers.com](#) identifies a clear market niche in a specific area. Your goal is then to provide as much information and relative data to the niche you serve.

According to Russer, creating a "Unique Positioning Statement" (UPS) that clearly states your area of specialization is critical. A strong UPS "immediately causes a gut reaction in your Web visitors that leaves them feeling that this is the agent who really understands what we want and need. If you don't brand your

site effectively or if you use your name to brand, you really have nothing to sell. When you specialize and provide exactly what your clients want, you will create a brand that has a high perceived value."

The next issue to address is how to make site more engaging. Many agents confuse information or content with engagement. To engage your Web visitors, you must write in a conversational tone. Avoid using "I" and focus on using "you." The most important thing that you can do is to make the site about your Web visitors. You're not telling them about you -- you're having a conversation about what matters to them.

A key Web marketing strategy is to have attention-grabbing headlines. The best way to do this is to hire a virtual copywriter who understands how to market and can also capture "your voice." By addressing the specific needs of your market and by speaking to them in a conversational tone, your conversion rates will increase dramatically.

Once your site is finished, test it out by asking your clients and associates whether the site is powerfully engaging. If not, keep working on it until it is. Again, an excellent way to do this is to brainstorm with your clients about what works for them.

Once you have completed these steps, you're finally ready to drive people to your Web site. Don't miss next week's article to learn how.

Bernice Ross, national speaker and CEO of Realestatecoach.com, is the author of "Waging War on Real Estate's Discounters" and "Who's the Best Person to Sell My House?" Both are available [online](#). She can be reached at bernice@realestatecoach.com or visit her blog at www.LuxuryClues.com.