

# Become resource for all things home ownership

## Part 3: Agent's guide to online success

BY [BERNICE ROSS](#), FRIDAY, MAY 9, 2008.

### Inman News

*(This is Part 3 of a three-part series. Read Part 1, "[Specialization's the name of the game](#)," and Part 2, "[Attract attention, attract business](#)." )*

Do you know the secrets of motivating people to visit your Web site and to give you their contact information? If not, today's article reveals the steps that you need to take to make your Web site generate more closed transactions for your business.

Before attempting to drive traffic to your Web site, you must have a very specific market niche that you serve; you must provide your Web visitor with a "wow!" experience that makes the visitor feel that "this site is perfect for me"; and you must have a conversational tone that makes your site about your Web visitor, not about you.

Real estate professionals are increasingly spending more of their marketing dollars online and less on print. To achieve the maximum return on your marketing dollar, you must integrate your print marketing with your Web marketing. Use your print advertising to drive people who want additional information to your Web site.

There are numerous ways to motivate people to visit your site. One of the tried and true methods is to offer downloadable coupons from local vendors. You could also have any number of downloadable reports such as "How to Avoid Costly Home Repairs," "Ten Ways to Cut Your Energy Costs" or "The Top 10 New Gadgets for Your Home." Notice that these articles are not necessarily about the real estate transaction. Instead, they focus on the issues of home ownership. Your goal is to become a resource for all aspects of home ownership, not just issues dealing with the real estate transaction.

When you serve a specific market niche, one of the smartest strategies that you can use is to engage your Web visitors in a conversation about what's great about your particular niche or location. For example, you could do a mailer that asks local residents to go online and vote for their favorite restaurant. Another alternative would be to create a blog or a community Web site where others can post comments and pictures (be sure to moderate comments). Ask for stories about growing up in the area 30, 40 or 50 years ago. The point is to get people engaged in what is fun and exciting about your area or niche. Become the place on the Web where they "meet, greet, and discuss."

Michael Russer in his Online Dominance class uses a different strategy to target statistically likely sellers. If the average length of time that someone in your area stays in their home is six years, then he recommends that you identify people who have been in their present home five to seven years and market to them. These are the people to whom you send your print marketing. Russer says that focusing on this three-year window normally achieves excellent results.

All of these strategies are great approaches, but the bottom line is how to get your Web visitors to volunteer their personal information. Russer says there's a simple approach: Use a privacy policy.

When you require Web visitors to fill out a form to receive information, most will leave your site. On the other hand, using a privacy policy will actually help you obtain more information by giving your Web visitor the option of providing their contact information. Russer says his privacy policy guarantees that any information Web visitors provide will be private and will not be shared with any other source.

"We follow up by explaining that we understand that most of our Web visitors are in the information gathering stage and that they prefer to remain anonymous," Russer said. "If the Web visitor is uncomfortable providing their information, there is no obligation to do so. What's surprising about this approach is that by making the form optional, approximately 80 percent of your Web visitors will provide their information."

This approach honors the Web visitor's desire to remain anonymous. Your goal is to be available if and when they need you.

A major trend that is emerging from blogging and social networking is that people may visit your site repeatedly provided they get what they want and have the option of remaining anonymous. Then, when they're ready to list or buy a property, they will contact you because they perceive you to be the expert in the area. In fact, many agents report that they receive calls that sound like this:

*"I've been visiting your Web site/blog for a long time. We're thinking about listing our house and you're obviously the expert in the area. Do you have time to work with us?"*

Furthermore, when you are the area specialist, people from outside your area who find you online will seek you out when they relocate.

Bottom line, the key to online marketing success is making your Web visitors say, "Wow -- this is the site for me!"

*Bernice Ross, national speaker and CEO of [Realestatecoach.com](http://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](mailto:bernice@realestatecoach.com) or visit her blog at [www.LuxuryClues.com](http://www.LuxuryClues.com).*

\*\*\*