

Internet Marketing Strategies



for
**Real Estate
Professionals**



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Overview of the INTERNET Search Market for Real Estate Professionals

Real estate is a very competitive vertical for gaining visibility on the Internet. Real estate professionals need to understand that search engines are frequently making algorithmic changes which make the goal of ranking for specific keywords a moving target. What may be best practices at one point in time can change instantly with updates from the major search engines.



For this reason it is essential that real estate professionals either make a considerable commitment to stay abreast of the latest search engine changes, or that they work with a technology partner that does.

Website Equity

Similar to real estate, the best strategy for long term equity growth is for a real estate professional to own, rather than rent, a search engine friendly, fully responsive Internet presence. Just as real estate professionals spend years building their reputations in the marketplace, a strong website will build its own Internet reputation resulting in a type of “authority” from the search engines that will manifest itself as highly ranked pages from search engines and greater visibility to the real estate searching public. In January 2015, Google did an update requiring websites to be mobile-friendly for SEO.

Dominance of Mobile

Currently over 40% of Internet searches are conducted on mobile devices, but that number is expected to grow to over 80% by 2017. Google has increasingly demanded that websites must be mobile-friendly to maintain top ranking going forward. For this reason, agents must have a “responsive” site that adjusts the layout of the web page to suit the varying screen sizes of smart phones, tablets, phablets, etc. Google aside, users reject sites that don’t display on mobile devices. Do you really want to lose over 40% of you potential leads simply because your site is built on an outdated platform that does not conform to the expectations of today’s smart-phone obsessed public?



Exclusive vs. Shared Leads



Many lead sources provide agents with non-exclusive leads; meaning multiple agents are given the same lead. Not only does this result in an absolute feeding frenzy among the agents who get the leads, but the leads themselves are harassed to the point that they won't even accept calls from agents. Exclusive leads on the other hand are leads that are owned by only one agent. The objective of an intelligent Internet marketing campaign is to keep an agent supplied with exclusive leads. When it comes to leads- **BE SELFISH, DO NOT SHARE!**

SEO Diversification

There are strategies that produce lots of paid leads quickly and there are strategies that produce a reliable stream of consistent leads over time. They both have their place in a balanced Internet marketing campaign. Pay-per-click campaigns can produce a good volume of leads in a relatively short period of time. Organic search leads take a much longer time to generate but have no linear connection to how much you are paying for a campaign. The key is to strategically utilize both approaches to build a solid lead pipeline that continues to produce more and more sales over time.

Working Internet Leads

When people are looking for a home to buy on the Internet, they are doing so because they want information NOW! If you receive an emailed lead, getting in touch with them within five minutes of the request significantly increases your chances of working with them; it also shows the client that you are at the top of your game. If the lead has provided a phone number, call them! A phone call is always more personable than an email response. If they do not answer, leave them a message. If your competitor calls while you email and the client picks up the phone, guess what? You just lost that customer. Once again, it is about building a relationship through trust. If you are responsive to their needs, they know that they can rely upon you. This is your first chance to impress them and let them know that they are important to you.



It is a fact that homebuyer's that use the web most often select the first agent that shows a genuine interest in their needs.



Most homebuyer's will visit and submit requests for information on multiple sites, so the fastest Realtor wins. Organic leads are like organic vegetables – they deteriorate rapidly! In fact, Internet leads start to "age" after just five minutes.

Your lead can become downright cold within 30 minutes, and waiting until the next day reduces your chances of converting the lead into a customer.

It is essential that an agent has the capability to be instantly notified of new leads so that they can respond within the five minute window. If an agent is not able to do this, any efforts at generating leads are diminished.

We regularly hear excuses from agents regarding why they were unable to contact a lead immediately. Don't have the information that they are requesting? Call them anyway to tell them personally that you will get it to them. Remember the goal- form a relationship.

You must go from being "an agent" to "*THEIR AGENT*". Once this is accomplished you don't need to worry about them contacting other agents since in their mind they already have one.

What if you get a lead while you are already with a client? If you are with a customer when you are "interrupted" with a lead, it only takes a few seconds to tell your lead that you will call them back with the information they want as soon as you finish with your current appointment.



Make the contact and make them yours, don't make the contact and don't be surprised when they won't even return your call.

The bottom line is this: if you are not immediately responding to your Internet leads, you're missing out on 90% or more of the success you should be experiencing.



mistake



We See **REAL ESTATE PROFESSIONALS** Make

1. **No Equity:** Renting a website vs. Owning a website
2. **Web-Responsive:** Having a non-responsive website (or one that has a mobile friendly add-on that doesn't work well on tablets)
3. **Lead Farms (Shared Leads):** Competing with countless other agents for Zillow, Trulia, Realtor.com "exclusive" leads wastes time, energy, and MONEY
4. **Short Term Focus:** Solely focusing on PPC Marketing and Not SEO
 - **PPC** = SHORT term results (typically 2%+ close rate)
 - **SEO** = LONG term success (typically 15%+ close rate)
5. **Agent-Responsiveness:** Not following up with internet leads quickly

WHY INTERNET LEADS ARE DIFFERENT

Building Trust

Internet leads need to be approached differently than the traditional real estate lead. The most important thing to remember is that homebuyers that are searching on the web (which is 91% of all homebuyers according to the National Association of Realtors (NAR)) have a different mentality than an individual who was personally referred to you by a colleague or former client.



Since their only exposure to you is through the Internet, they don't entirely trust you yet. You have to create that trust by being responsive. Simply stated, the faster you respond to an Internet lead, the faster you are able to establish a relationship and the greater your chances are for working with that customer.

Online Professionalism



People judge a book by its cover. What kind of “cover” does your website display? On our quest to build trust and develop a relationship with Internet leads a professional website is a critical step in building credibility and trust with the lead. If your SEO campaign is effective, the lead has found your site because Google served it up as some of the most relevant content for their search. You’ve gotten Google’s “introduction”, don’t ruin it by having an unprofessional or amateur website.

Even the highly deserved personal referral that so many agents live and die by can be turned off by a quick Internet search that reveals an unprofessional, or just as likely, non-discoverable website. Frankly, if you can’t be found online, even personal referrals will assume that you’re not a “big deal” in real estate.

What Successful Agents Do Online

Activerain.com conducted a survey of nearly 2,000 real estate professionals to find out what separates the top agents from those struggling...

- Successful Agents: More than \$100,000 / Annually
- Struggling Agents: Less than \$35,000 / Annually

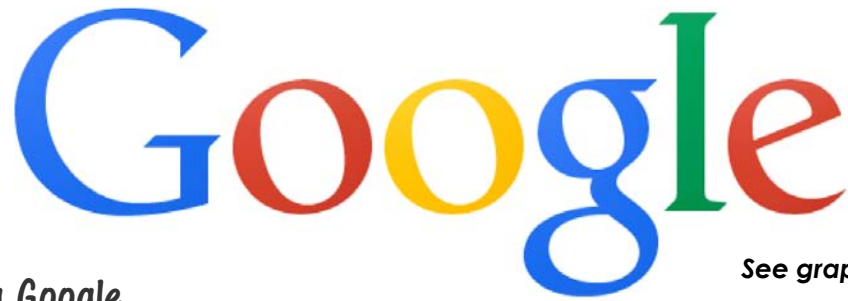
What Works!

Successful agents do the following:

- 175% more likely to do internet marketing
- 55% more likely to have a website with IDX
- Spend 10x more on marketing
- Spend 6x more on technology
- 35% more likely to blog
- Broadcast on Social Media

<http://activerain.com/rich-real-estate-agent>





See graphic on next page ►

Understanding Google

There are 3 distinct areas in Google when you search any term.

1. Pay Per Click ads

- a. Show up on the top and on the right side and say "AD" next to them
- b. You ever click on the ads?
- c. PPC ads are expensive. People don't like being marketed to

2. Local Citations

- a. Defined as listings of your business name, address and phone number
- b. Show up in the middle and sometimes upper right hand part of the screen
- c. Local citations are online yellow page ads and displayed primarily on Google searches and mobile devices.

3. Organic search results

- a. Show up "below the line" and are limited to 10 per page.
- b. Organic leads are what we refer to as the "**money pot**" for real estate professionals
- c. How often do you look at the 2nd page? It is critical to be on the first page

Like building your reputation as an agent, building visibility with Google takes time. It usually takes about 90-120 days to start gaining traction. For this reason, and intelligent PPC strategy can help to fill the pipeline while waiting for a steady stream of organic leads.

The IDEAL Strategy is to show up numerous times on all 3 sections to maximize hits and leads to your website. Pardon the pun, but when you can take up lots of "real estate" on the Google search page, you will quite simply get more leads!

1
Pay Per Click Ads
(Google AdWords)

2
Local Citations
(Google Local Ads)

3
Organic SEO

Pay Per Click (PPC)

Pay per click is exactly what it sounds like, you pay for leads to click your advertisement. There are several advantages and disadvantages to pay per click campaigns, and it is crucial to know them, so you can decide what they can, and can't, do for you:

Advantages:

- Immediate placement on the first page of the search engine
- Prominent visible placement
- Has a higher closing ratio than shared leads (i.e., Zillow, Trulia, Realtor.com)



Disadvantages

- Your ad appears only as long as you pay
- People instinctively avoid ads and other marketing
- You do not control the price of the lead. The more agents who participate the more expensive it gets.



Local Citations

Local citations are defined as listings of your business name and address on other webpages - even if there is no link to your website. An example of a local citation might be an online yellow pages directory where your business is listed, but not linked to. Citations can also be found on local chamber of commerce pages, or on a local business association page that includes your business information, even if they are not linking at all to your website.

Citations are a key component of the ranking algorithms in Google and Bing. Other factors being equal, businesses with a greater number of citations will probably rank higher than businesses with fewer citations. Citations from well-established and well-indexed portals (i.e., Superpages.com) help increase the degree of certainty the search engines have about your business's contact information and categorization. There are over 1000 local listing sites. Here is a sample of some of the more popular local citation sources:



WARNING: If you have inconsistent information on various local citation websites, you may get penalized by the major search engines.

If you are a local business, such as a real estate professional, a local citation rollout strategy is a VERY important factor to your success.

ORGANIC SEO

Organic Search Engine Optimization (SEO): What is it and how do I get it?

Search engine optimization is the practice of working to enhance the capability of a site's pages to rank high in the search engine results pages for keywords. Search engine optimization can and should be done both "onsite" and "offsite".

"Onsite" Optimization



All pages that feature keywords and content that are likely to produce traffic should be crawlable by the search engine robots. How pages are interlinked is very important from a user perspective because you want people that click on a link to arrive at a suitable page. For example, a link titled, "3 Bedroom Homes" should point to a page with 3 bedroom homes as an example. How pages are interlinked is very important for the search engines so the relationship between pages can be understood. Inter-site links also distinguish the hierarchy of pages which indicates page prominence to search engines.

An example of this is your index page ranking higher than a less-important page such as a privacy policy. Overuse of internal linking when using keyword anchor text for optimization purposes is considered a "Black Hat" SEO technique that can get your website banned from Google.

Minimal link depth (how many clicks does it take to get to internal pages) is also a factor in search engine optimization. Using flat website architecture is ideal because it's easier for users to navigate and for the search engines bots to crawl. Most importantly, having every page optimized for a different but semantically connected keyword greatly increases your chances for gaining web traffic overall.

Keyword usage within the content of your web pages should be kept to a minimum. Use the same key phrase that is in your page title at least once in your article to support the page title and include a few variations of the term as well but stay away from forcing keywords in. It's very easy to come up with content that is not keyword stuffed but still relevant to the page when you take employers, schools, park lands, new construction and master planned community information into account. A minimum of 600 words of content per page is recommended.



Meta keyword tag stuffing went the way of the dinosaur so don't spend a lot of time on this. Meta descriptions however are very important because Google may use this information to pull as a snippet to explain what a particular page is about on the search engine results page. Meta descriptions can also entice a click-through on your result if the description says something compelling.

“Off-Site” Optimization



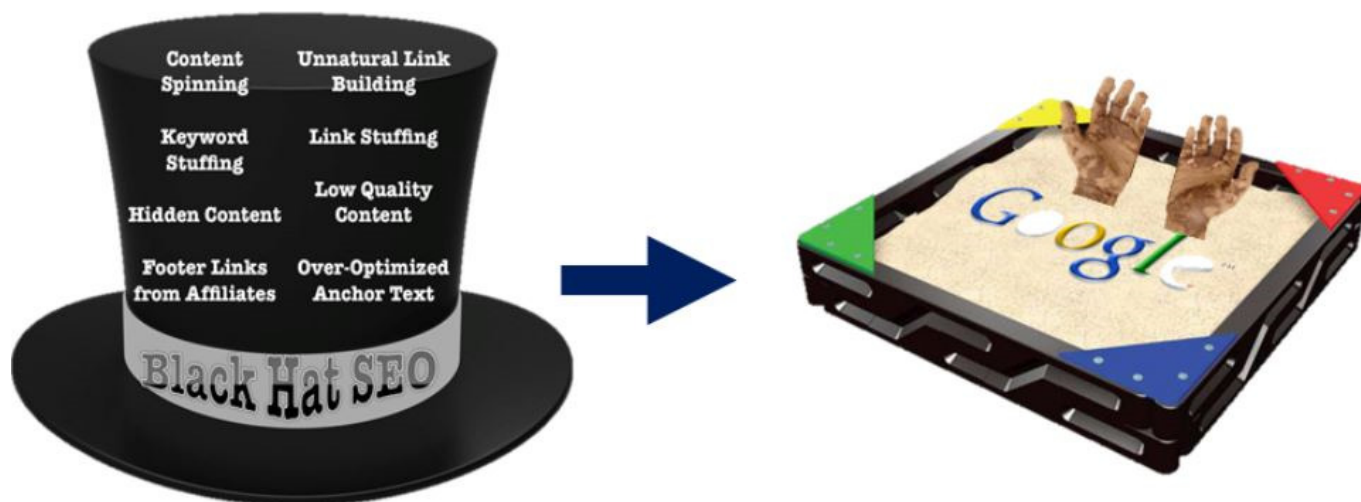
Off-site optimization has always been an integral part of ranking web pages for keywords. Off-site optimization typically results in links that point to pages on a web site from pages on separate root domains. These are also known as backlinks. Prior to the algorithm filter known as Penguin, the raw numbers of backlinks pointing to a site could manipulate ranking. Post-Penguin, raw numbers can get you in a lot of trouble particularly if you have a great deal of exact match anchor text links that use your “money” keywords such as [City] Homes for Sale or [City] Real Estate.

The Internet neighborhoods where you get your links also matter. If the bulk of backlinks that point to your site are from low authority, low quality and generic neighborhoods, this could be a spam flag to search engines. Long gone is the day when the sheer volume of links was a top ranking factor. Quantity can still have a positive impact but it's the how, what, and where that is primarily taken into account.

Backlinks that originate from reputable and authoritative sites are the most valuable. An authoritative site is one that has developed a high trust factor with the search engines due to popularity and longevity. Since real estate websites are typically commercial in nature, real estate professionals should make the most of social profiles and sharing, blog posting, and developing a persona as an authority in the field.

A few links from reputable sources hold the same value as hundreds of low quality, low relevance backlinks from an automated source. Furthermore, using automated or spammy techniques to gain back links is likely to get a website manually or algorithmically penalized.

BEWARE OF BLACK HAT SEO!



Black Hat SEO DEFINITION: Black hat SEO is a practice that increases a page's rank in search engines through means that violate the search engines' terms of service

Black Hat SEO is most commonly defined as a disapproved practice that increases a page's ranking in a search engine result page. These practices are against the search engine's terms of service and can result in the site being banned from the search engine and affiliate sites.

"Is the work that I'm doing adding value to the user or am I just doing this for search engines to see?" is a litmus test on whether an SEO tactic would go against a search engine's webmaster guideline. If no value is added to the user, but rankings are likely to increase, then your decisions are highly likely to be black hat.

REMEMBER

- **Black hat SEO** can cause you irreparable damage with Google
- These techniques can actually create negative "points" with Google
- Hacking, cheating and tricking are some of the terms used by Google
- You could end up in the "Google black sand box" if caught using these techniques
- Beware of companies that promise overnight SEO success. More than likely they are using **Black Hat SEO techniques**.

Google Algorithm Updates



- Google changes algorithms 100s of times per quarter. They have an entire team to do this, then give their updates names, such as "Panda", "Penguin", and "Hummingbird".
- Google catches and punishes cheaters
- They have named these cheating methods that they have found and published for all to see
- Some of the names they use are "panda," "hummingbird" and "penguin."
- Once again, we need to build up the website gradually and over time

If your GOAL is to build a long-lasting business and internet presence then you should avoid Black Hat SEO.

HOW TO GET HIGH QUALITY EXCLUSIVE INTERNET LEADS



SMART Website

High Quality Mobile Responsive PROFESSIONAL

OWN don't RENT (similar to owning vs. renting a home)



SMART Search Engine Optimization (SEO) Strategy

Keywords, optimization, local citations, onsite and offsite content and link building



SMART Pay Per Click (PPC) Strategy

Utilize multiple forms of PPC and drive to YOUR website

Step by Step Guide to Internet Marketing

Step 1: SEO Friendly Website

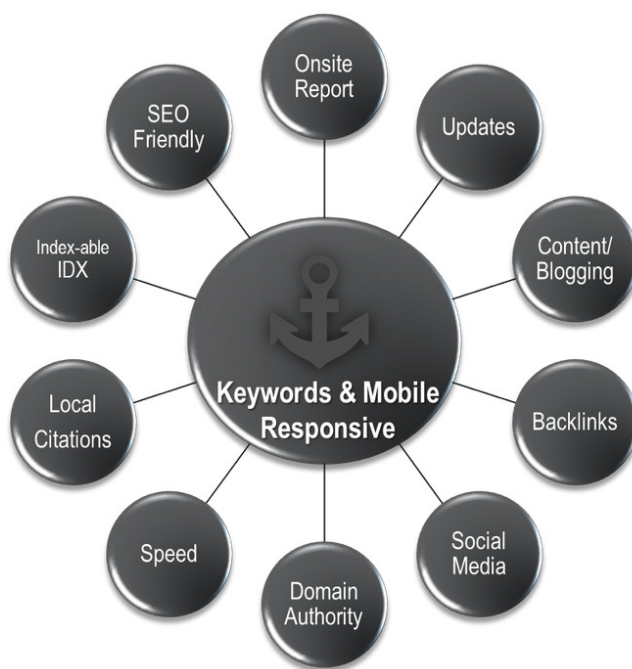
Step 2: Keywords

Step 3: *Smart SEO & PPC Marketing built around keywords

Step 4: Leads!!!!

**Once KEYWORDS are programmed into the backend of your site, the more "POINTS" you have, the higher probability you show up on page one of Google, Bing, Yahoo and the other Search engines.*

This diagram represents the key factors that SEO Experts believes for Real Estate Professional's websites



- Google "points" are how you get ranked with Google
- Some of the key factors for these points are keywords, content, links and speed
- This is how you get a good Google reputation and high internet ranking
- Recent Google news release requiring sites to be **mobile friendly**.

MLS Database IDX Displays

MLS IDX displays allow website visitors to search for homes on the local realtor MLS system. We always recommend that real estate professionals use these as it gives a potential lead a reason to go to, and stay on your website. A high volume of visitors combined with substantial time on the site results in a steady stream of solid leads.



MLS database IDX displays are typically housed in iframes meaning that all the search activity is happening on the IDX provider's website and not yours. This type of configuration is problematic to search engine crawlers because it's difficult to associate framed content with the page containing the frames. This impacts the ability to index listings that can empower your site with buyer and seller related content. The framed content is far less likely to be included in the index which leaves the website owner with only a few pages to win traffic on. The best way to solve this issue is to use an indexable IDX solution. With this option, website owners can literally use every listing in their market as a doorway to their site. Although there are pros and cons to indexable IDX solutions, SEO Experts currently recommends this as a way to get extra Google "points."

Social Media 101



Social Media sites play a key role in establishing your internet presence and enhancing your SEO strategy. As of February, 2015 there are more than 200 major social media sites. Unlike any other marketing medium, social media has the ability to reach millions in seconds. In an increasingly competitive market, a real estate agent's ability to reach the largest group of people in the shortest amount of time plays a lead role in generating sales dollars.

The web has restructured the way people do business; prospecting using only traditional methods like print and direct mail can leave you behind the curve.

Understanding how social media impacts website rankings is a complex concept. Successful and active social media campaigns typically correlate with good webpage rankings. Understanding the causation is the complex part so we'd like to take a step back and suggest that while social media is not precisely SEO, it is a crucial part of an overall web marketing strategy. Social media engagement is directly linked with getting referring traffic to your site; more traffic increases the chances of gaining organic, inbound links.

More traffic can also impact the time spent on your site which can have a positive impact on how well pages rank.

The list of social media sites is expansive and the tides of popularity turn depending on the whim of the masses. We'll take a look at some of the biggest and most widely used platforms and some of the up and comers in 2015. Here is a list that we feel is the most valuable for real estate professionals and can be easily implemented as part of an overall marketing plan.



Google Plus



This is Google's very own social networking platform. Creating a personal and business page is an absolute must as many of the perks associated with good placement such as Google Places and Google Authorship are directly related to participation. Including industry relevant and authoritative people and businesses in your circles can increase your own relevancy.

Being included in industry relevant people's and business circles can impact where your content shows up when a logged in user performs searches on Google for keywords.

YouTube (bought by Google in 2006)



With more than 800 million+ unique visitors and more than 4 billion hours of videos watched each month, YouTube has grown to be the 2nd most popular search engine on the web. Beating out competitors like Bing and Yahoo, this Google owned powerhouse is a unique social community that will only continue to grow.

Once only seen as a place to post family videos, cat tricks, and pranks; YouTube is now an exceptional tool to use for promoting your individual products, projects, listings, and company.

Using the latest up to date SEO techniques, you can make sure that your video will be seen across all of your various social platforms and as a bonus, your content will be easily indexed into Google's own search engine for an even broader audience.

Facebook Business Page



This is a staple in social media marketing. Understanding the difference between personal and business pages is the most important aspect as search engines are only able to include a limited amount of personal profile information in the indices. Business page profiles can be viewed whether a user is logged in to Facebook or not. Marketing as a business has drawbacks currently because you cannot interact with other members of Facebook unless they have “liked” your business profile.

Twitter



Twitter is a great resource to use to drive traffic to social media posts, blog posts and web pages. It's great to use for content inspiration, personal branding and relationship building. Currently, Google does not index Tweets, and is therefore not directly responsible for impacting SEO.

LinkedIn



Primarily a B2B platform, LinkedIn is a great place to network with other professionals and grow your referral base. With more than 200 million users, it is the largest professional network online. Developing this profile in the most professional manner is a must for anyone in the industry as it's publicly viewable when buyers or sellers research your name or your business.

ActiveRain



ActiveRain is a real estate niche-specific content management system (CMS) which requires a paid membership. Users can post and easily format blog entries which are published and automatically shared among potential homebuyers, investors, sellers and fellow real estate professionals. This is a top notch platform for marketing and is suggested for real estate professionals to support their site with quality, industry relevant backlinks.

Understand the Different Sources of Leads Available for Real Estate Agents



- Referral leads are the best quality leads
- Organic leads have the highest quality of all the other leads
- Pay Per Click leads provide access to leads quicker
- Shared leads such as Trulia, Zillow and Realtor.com are low quality leads with a closing rate of 1-2%
- Open House leads have their pro's and con's.
- Referral leads typically have 40-70% close rate while organic leads typically have a success rate of 15-20%
- With SEO Experts you should be able to pick up 1-3 additional transactions in the first 6 months, and they see a dramatic increase in months 6-12+!



Investing in SEO the Warren Buffet Way

Forbes May 2014

You simply can't approach SEO with a short-term investment mentality. If you're looking for a quick hold-and-flip, that isn't SEO. If you want to know with some measure of statistical certainty what your ROI will be over the next quarter or year, that isn't SEO. If on the other hand, you're willing to invest for the long term, if you have a long-term vision and you're willing to do whatever it takes to reach your end goal... that's SEO.



<http://www.forbes.com/sites/javsondemers/2014/05/21/what-roi-can-i-expect-from-seo/>

Key Things to Look for when Outsourcing your Internet Marketing

1

Industry Experience

Getting people from the search engines to your website is only half the battle. Understanding the behavior of the potential clients in that industry are keys to converting them into a lead

2

Technology Experience (do they do this in house or outsource it)

Unfortunately most companies outsource and act as "middlemen." Make them PROVE their in-house resources.

3

Transparent Delivery

24/7 portal with analytics, lead tracking, and documentation of all SEO work performed

4

Who owns the website and final product?

Don't rent a site – own it!



Why National SEO Experts?

- Real estate and internet marketing experience
- BBB Accreditation
- SEO Experts approach of combining SEO Leads (avg. close rate of 15%+) with PPC Leads (avg. close rate of 2%+) is optimal for short and long term success.
- Clients own all website/ SEO work
- Lead Guarantees
- Advertising Credits available (for agents that qualify and their geographic area) that could cover over 60% of your monthly costs.
- Can integrate with most IDX and Lead Management/CRM Systems
- Huge Return on Investment (ROI) Potential



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