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Three steps to digital marketing success

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For years, the traditional marketing strategies of paid advertising, Yellow Pages listing enhancements, direct mail, and consistent communication with previous clients proved successful for real estate professionals. However, digital technology has forever changed the marketing landscape, along with the way consumers receive and respond to marketing messages. Real estate professionals must integrate digital strategies into their marketing plans in order to effectively increase market share.

There are three key elements of a successful digital marketing plan:

Web site: According to www.realestatemarketingblog.org, more than 85% of real estate transactions begin online. This makes it critical that independent real estate agents and agencies have attractive, informational, and user-friendly web sites. Sites that draw repeat visitors and drive sales are content-rich, frequently updated, and have useful digital applications, like mortgage calculators. Additionally, they include site links to other companies and organizations that can offer assistance to users, such as local banks, title companies, and home inspectors.

SEO: Strong SEO, or Search Engine Optimization, makes business web sites stand apart from their competition. 68% of web searchers only click on the first page of search results and many don't even scroll to the bottom of the page ("How to Improve Your SEO Clicks and Conversions," July 2, 2009, www.marketingexperiments.com). Also, searchers are 64% more likely to click on natural, or organic, search results rather than paid sponsorship links (www.realestatemarketingblog.org). SEO assists sites in achieving the top five to seven natural rankings in search engine results pages. Sites with targeted keywords used strategically throughout content, and a URL address with a relevant keyword included, are more likely to attain top natural rankings. Site popularity and rankings also increase when sites are linked to from other industry-related sites.

E-marketing plan: An e-marketing plan helps drive web site traffic and strengthen SEO. It typically focuses on the creation and execution of a regular e-newsletter to clients and prospects. E-newsletters are budget-friendly tools that can position agents and agencies as industry experts in their local markets through timely and engaging content. They include links to various sections of the business' site to increase traffic, and e-newsletter sign-up options on both the e-newsletter ("forward to a friend") and site ("register for our e-newsletter") help build prospect lists. E-newsletters are a proven digital solution to quickly and effectively boost market visibility.

When well-developed, these three digital strategies work seamlessly to capture the attention of potential customers, expand business and market share, and build client loyalty. However, implementing and utilizing these techniques - on top of the demands of a hectic real estate work load - can present a challenge. For those real estate professionals that don't have the time or

expertise to kick-start a digital marketing plan, a marketing consultant or firm can prove useful in designing the most appropriate digital blueprint for your growing business.

Linda Fanaras is the president and founder of Millennium Integrated Marketing, Boston, Mass and Manchester, N.H.

New England Real Estate Journal - 17 Accord Park Drive #207, Norwell MA 02061 - (781) 878-4540