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The lead-generating power of backlinks

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Visually appealing, informative real estate business web site: check. Blogging and social media participation driving traffic to the site: check. Web site optimized for search engines, including backlinks: what the heck are backlinks?!

If this scenario seems familiar, you are not alone. Many real estate agents and brokers are working diligently to keep their web sites relevant to their local markets. This includes investment in professional site design and search engine optimization (SEO) services, and consistent knowledge-sharing via social media accounts and blog entries.

However, a valuable - and often overlooked - method for increasing a web site's rank in online search results is backlinking. A backlink is simply another web site that links to your site. They are used by search engines to rank site popularity and credibility. So, the more backlinks a site has from other trustworthy sites, the higher its position on a list of organic (non-paid) search results. Find out how many backlinks your site currently has by visiting www.backlinkcheck.com.

The most effective type of backlink is the anchor text link. This is a description with a clickable link that helps search engines like Google rank a site based on keywords. For instance, a link to a site like "Available Boston brownstones" is ideal as opposed to one that simply states, "Check out details here." The terms "Boston" and "brownstones" give the search engines data on the site, while the second one adds no value to the site's ranking.

Wondering how to increase your site's backlinks? Reciprocal links with other sites and purchasing links are both discouraged, and can spell trouble for your site's search engine credibility. One-way links from other sites to yours is the goal - and they should occur throughout your site instead of only to the home page.

Successful backlinking strategies include submitting your site to real estate industry-related and search directory listings (like Google Local, Yelp, and Yahoo!), posting articles to EzineArticles.com, and participating in content exchanges, wherein you offer an article or report to content-driven sites in exchange for a free backlink. In addition, include links to your site when participating in online forums and commenting on blog posts. You can also highlight your current listings by posting and tagging photos of them on Flickr (with links to your site, of course).

Backlinks have the power to significantly boost your site's exposure and generate qualified leads. If you don't have time to spare on increasing your backlinks, contact an integrated marketing firm to help you select a professional link building package or service.

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