

Web Site Novice Gets Early Results

By Lovina Worick

If I could give anyone a one-lined answer for the best and quickest way to get results with a Web site, I would simply say, "Do what Alex Ramirez did." Alex Ramirez, owner of Trusted Mortgage Pro, San Diego, Calif., has had his Web site up for just three months, but in less than a week, he'll be closing his first deal, which will pay for his site for the next several years. More significantly, he has 30 open loan files out of the 100 leads the site has generated at the time of this interview.

After nearly seven years in the business, Ramirez decided three years ago to open his own company. His business has been successful, with a current average of 30 closed loans a month with the help of 10 loan officers (a mix of part-and full-time) and two loan processors. With a desire to open up new markets beyond California and Colorado, he expanded his lending territory with the help of his Web site and net-branch affiliations. "I don't know of a better, more cost-effective way I could have expanded into other states without a Web site."

The Web site

Did the site generate immediate results? "To make it plain and simple, I had left the site as it was for the first month and nothing happened," says Ramirez. "After a month I decided to invest the time to take the training classes my Web site provider offered. I wasn't sure what would come of it because I am a beginner and I was a little hesitant about doing things on my own. But after the classes, I followed through on what I learned and then, what seemed like overnight, I was getting results." With approximately 100 leads in just a month and a half, it's

no wonder this new "online-preneur" is raving about the Web.

As a Web site newbie, Ramirez took on what most people don't when they first get a Web site—putting in the time to learn about his site's capabilities as well as learning Web site marketing techniques. It's not uncommon for an originator to buy a Web site under the misperception that it will magically generate leads just because it's there. A Web site is simply another marketing tool and channel. If you don't learn how to leverage it, you will not reap many rewards. But, as Ramirez demonstrates, learning even a little bit about different Web site marketing techniques can go a long way towards Internet success.

On top of the marketing, Ramirez also learned tips and gained ideas that helped him to maximize lead capture at his site. One such idea he had was to add property listings to his site. He realized that since he was in the business of helping his clients find investment properties, he could use his site to connect investors with properties.

That idea led to the next one: to develop relationships with listing agents, allowing them to place their listings on his site in exchange for the loan business that property will generate. He shared a great story to this effect. On a purchase application that came through his site, he contacted the listing agent after receiving a copy of the purchase agreement. After talking for a bit, he let the agent know that he was offering agents free listings on his site. She immediately understood the benefits and agreed to post her listings on his site. Ramirez now has a new source of referral business.

"I want my site to be a one stop

shop where we can handle the diversified needs of my clients," says Ramirez. "That's why I chose to have real estate listings on it." Ramirez's goal is to have his site equally serve his mortgage and real estate clients as well as his referral partners.

Marketing

"I'm all about investment and ROI," says Ramirez. "And the ROI on my site has spoken for itself." Since venturing out with the new marketing techniques, Ramirez has successfully generated over 100 leads (comprised of full apps, short apps, phone calls, listing inquiries and such). These leads have culminated into approximately 30 open loan files. "With the Web site-generated business, we have already doubled our average office production so far," says Ramirez.

How is he marketing his site? Most of his efforts have been to place banners and buy sponsored listings in Yahoo! and Google. Sponsored listings are keywords you 'buy' in search engines to guarantee a particular placement on the search results page when someone enters the keyword(s). (For a more complete explanation of sponsored listings visit: www.searchmarketing.yahoo.com.)


While this marketing has worked like a charm so far, Ramirez is aware that he shouldn't rest on his laurels. Right now, due to the current loan volume, he is squeezing out a few hours on the weekend to continue to refine his ads in Google and Yahoo! He researches his competitors' ads, makes tweaks to his ads and then reviews which changes get the most clicks. (With his search engine ad accounts, he is able to get information on how his ads are performing). And

with the income he'll be receiving from his online deals so far, he wants to expand his advertising budget.

Ramirez Recommends

"The first thing I thought when I saw the results I was getting was 'why didn't I do this a long time ago?' How much money would I have made?" But, he also remarks, "It's never too late."

He continues, "The site will work for you day and night. It gives your clients freedom to be at home and apply at their convenience. It also adds to your credibility. And

more importantly, sometimes people don't want to talk to you. Make sure your Web site is available to those customers. My site has become the LO that never sleeps." 



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