

Taking Net Profits to the **Extreme**

Web savvy builders are using the Internet to help boost profits several-fold.



BEING THERE

WHAT Profit From Your Web Site Investment
WHO CEA's Tech Home division, in association with All American Homes
WHEN Friday, January 14, 9–10 a.m.
WHERE Orange County Convention Center

by Blair Kuhn

Savvy builders are taking their Internet marketing to whole new levels. In the process, some builders are finding that they can improve leads and sales to online buyers, not by 20 percent or 40 percent, but often by several hundred percent. ■ How are they doing it? Three areas of focus have led many builders to extraordinary returns. First, they recognize their Web site does not stand alone. It is part of a larger marketing system that drives qualified leads and physical traffic. Secondly, they execute well on a number of proven best practices when redeveloping their Web site. Finally, they put people, processes, and tools in place to follow-up with leads, prospects, and buyers.

ABOUT THE PRESENTER

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DESIGNING YOUR SYSTEM FOR RESULTS

When redesigning or redeveloping your Web site, following a number of proven best practices can produce industry leading results. D.R. Horton in South Florida recently went through the process of upgrading its Web site. More than a face-lift, it was a well planned and executed combination of form and function.

"Our new Web site is fast, easy to navigate, has clear calls to action, and provides browsers with more interaction through customizable e-brochures. It creates a more enjoyable and informative experience for our customers," says Sandy Sharpsteen, vice president of sales and marketing.

- Make your pages light. More than 1/3 of Web site users still access the Internet through dial-up accounts. If your average page download is more than 75K, don't expect these users to stick around.
- Make the site easy to use and test it before you build it to make sure users can accomplish their goals. Try this: Ask an assistant to complete a scenario. For example, "You are relocating to [your market]. Find a neighborhood/home you like, get directions, find the schools, and ask for a brochure." Now watch and learn.
- Make it easy for users to ask a question and start a dialogue.
- Integrate your advertising and promotion online to drive physical traffic and leads.
- Add "coming soon" community subscriptions.
- Allow users to interact and customize their experience (e.g., e-brochures, my favorites).

FOLLOWING UP

The key to converting all those leads into physical traffic and sales is a combination of people, processes, and tools that support a smooth transition from browser to buyer.

- Make someone responsible for handling leads.
- Come up with a standardized method for handling all leads and make sure your on-site sales consultants understand it.
- Put tools in place to support your methodology that may include email campaign management, lead/prospect tracking, and reporting. **THB**



Builders should think of their Web sites as part of a larger marketing system.



BUILDING A MARKETING SYSTEM

Your Web site is part of a larger marketing system that may include radio, television, direct mail, print advertising, outdoor advertising, public relations, and promotional events. It's time to treat interactive efforts as part of your marketing system. The payoff can mean higher sales velocity, lower marketing costs, and momentum that can take your communities through multiple phase releases. Consider the following:

- **Integrate Upstream**—Your Web site should be integrated with your external marketing. This means, your Web site should feed third parties you may use for advertising (e.g., www.homebuilder.com, www.newhomesource.com, www.americanhome-guides.com) and all your off-line media should encourage Web site visits.
- **Reinforce advertising**—You may be running promotions or advertising, reinforce these on your Web site and your leads and traffic will improve.
- **Integrate downstream**—Now that your leads are coming in, you need to deal with them. Leads should automatically feed into your system for follow-up.