

# Real Estate Website Design 101

Captivate and Convert Leads Online



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# Introduction

*Every home buyer and seller expects a professional-looking, easy-to-navigate, well-designed real estate website from agents today.* Practically all other brands in all other industries these individuals purchase products and services from have clean, responsive sites.

Those that don't become afterthoughts to these folks — and for good reason. The look and feel of a company's website often indicates just how much effort they put into their marketing — and how much they care about their customers' online experience.

To put it bluntly: Fail to offer a modern user experience for your visitors (you know — those who may become leads), and you could do irreparable damage to your agency's reputation.

What this all boils down to is simple. ***Spend the time, energy, and money necessary to create a mobile-friendly, intuitive business website.*** This will put you in prime position to compete with other real estate professionals in your market online — and give you the digital foundation necessary to win new leads and clients, and scale your lead generation goals.

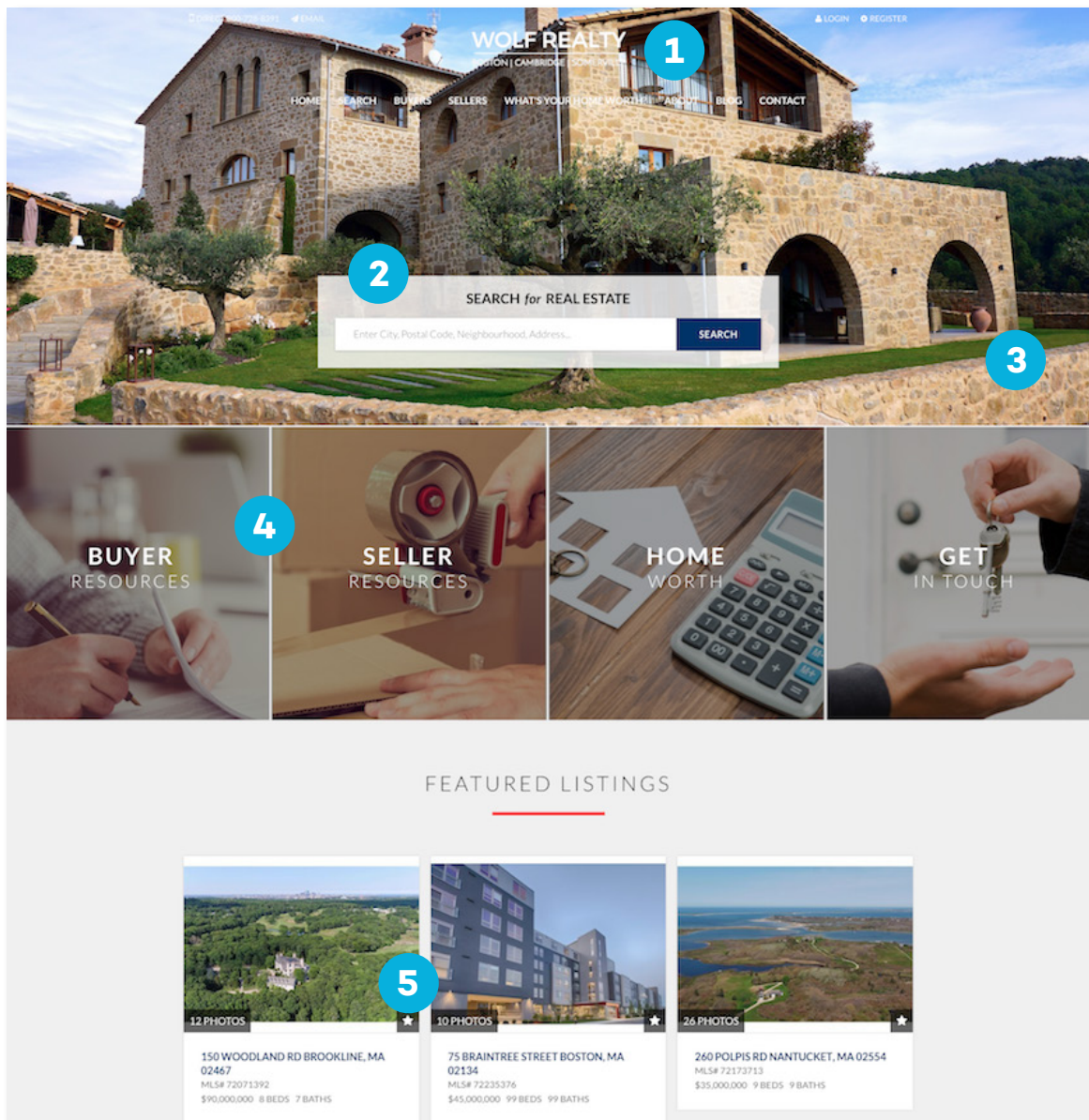
In our guide, you'll find out exactly:

- **How you can design your real estate website for better visitor-to-lead conversion.**
- **How top-producing agents appeal to their niche buyer and/or seller audience via their websites.**
- **How to design (or redesign) your own site, based on step-by-step directions and visual examples.**

First thing's first, though: ***Let's explore how you can make your website look good on mobile and desktop,*** and dive into must-have features and functionality.



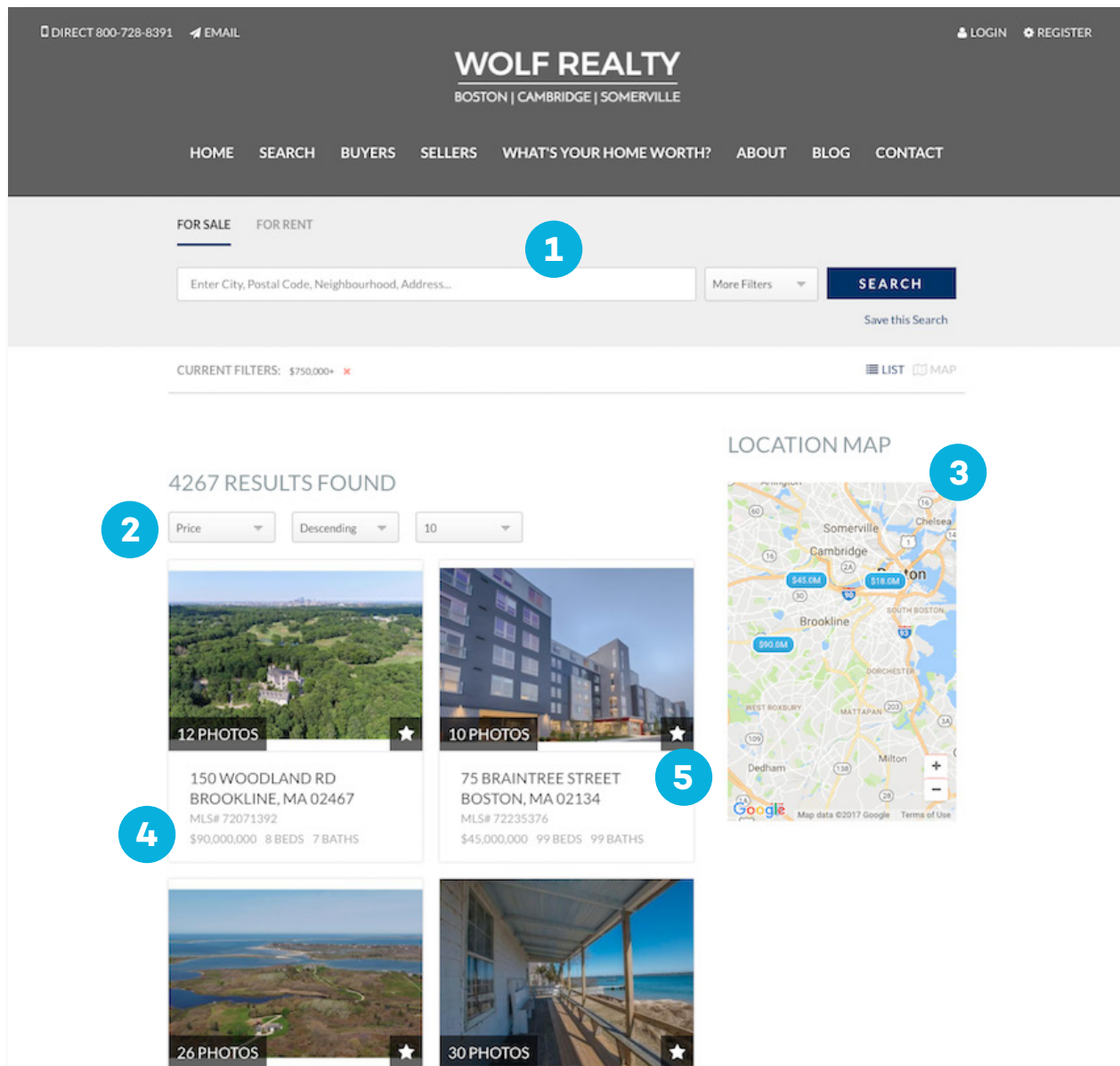
# Essential Elements of Your Homepage



1. **The agency logo** and links to the core website pages are featured prominently atop the page.
2. Visitors instantly see the **listing search bar**, one of the first things they often look for.
3. The homepage immediately attracts attention thanks to the stunning **listing image** featured in the header/hero section.
4. **Resource pages** are also highlighted prominently in the above-the-fold section of the page.
5. Thanks to IDX integration, **notable listings** — attractive and interesting ones — are featured.



# An Exemplary Listing Page Structure



1. Finding homes for sale or rent is easy, thanks to the **search bar** at the very top of the page.

2. Buyers can use the **price and spec filters** to narrow down the real estate listings they can view.

3. The **location map** on the side offers another option for users to identify worthwhile listings.

4. Each listing features the essential info — **address, list price, beds/baths** — for visitors to see.


5. The **star over each listing** means users can easily favorite and save the listings they like most.

# Effective Blog Post Formatting

1

5 WAYS TO PREP YOUR HOME FOR AUTUMN!

2



## 5 WAYS TO PREP YOUR HOME FOR FALL

### Clean Fireplaces and Chimneys

Check for soot or creosote build-up. After removing all dust, soot, and additional debris, clean with a mixture of warm water, bleach, and Trisodium Phosphate. Know of any professional chimney sweepers? Give them a call before starting your first fire of the season.

3

### Inspect and Clean Gutters

Clean your gutters and downspouts. When using a ladder, make sure you have a standoff stabilizer to keep the ladder from damaging the gutter. Also, consider making a minor home improvement by adding mesh gutter guards available at hardware stores and on amazon.

### Replace Furnace Filters

Make sure to clean or replace your furnace filters. It's a good idea to check your furnace at least once a year. Tip: when replacing a filter, look for the marking that tells you which side of the filter should face the furnace. Schedule a visit by a professional today to beat the last minute rush before winter commences

### Drain and Winterize Irrigation Systems

There are many steps for draining and winterizing your irrigation system. It all depends on whether you have a manual or automatic drain valve system. Use your air compressor to clear water from your sprinkler system. If you have a large sprinkler setup, tackle it zone by zone.

### Repair Sidewalks, Driveways and Steps


Make sure you patch up all of those cracks before the winter freeze makes them worse. First, clean out any cracks in your sidewalk, driveway, or steps to your main entrance. Second, plug it with a pre-mixed filler or a paste of water and portland cement. Large cracks may require professional work as they require "undercutting", a process of making a large crack even larger so the patch locks in place when it hardens.

I hope you find these tips helpful. Below is my open house schedule for Labor Day Weekend.

Please contact me directly for a FREE Home Valuation Report | 617.555.5555 | [placester@placester.com](mailto:placester@placester.com)

5

4



## GET IN TOUCH

## SEARCH LISTINGS

1. A fun, interesting **title** grabs visitors' attention and get them to click the blog post.

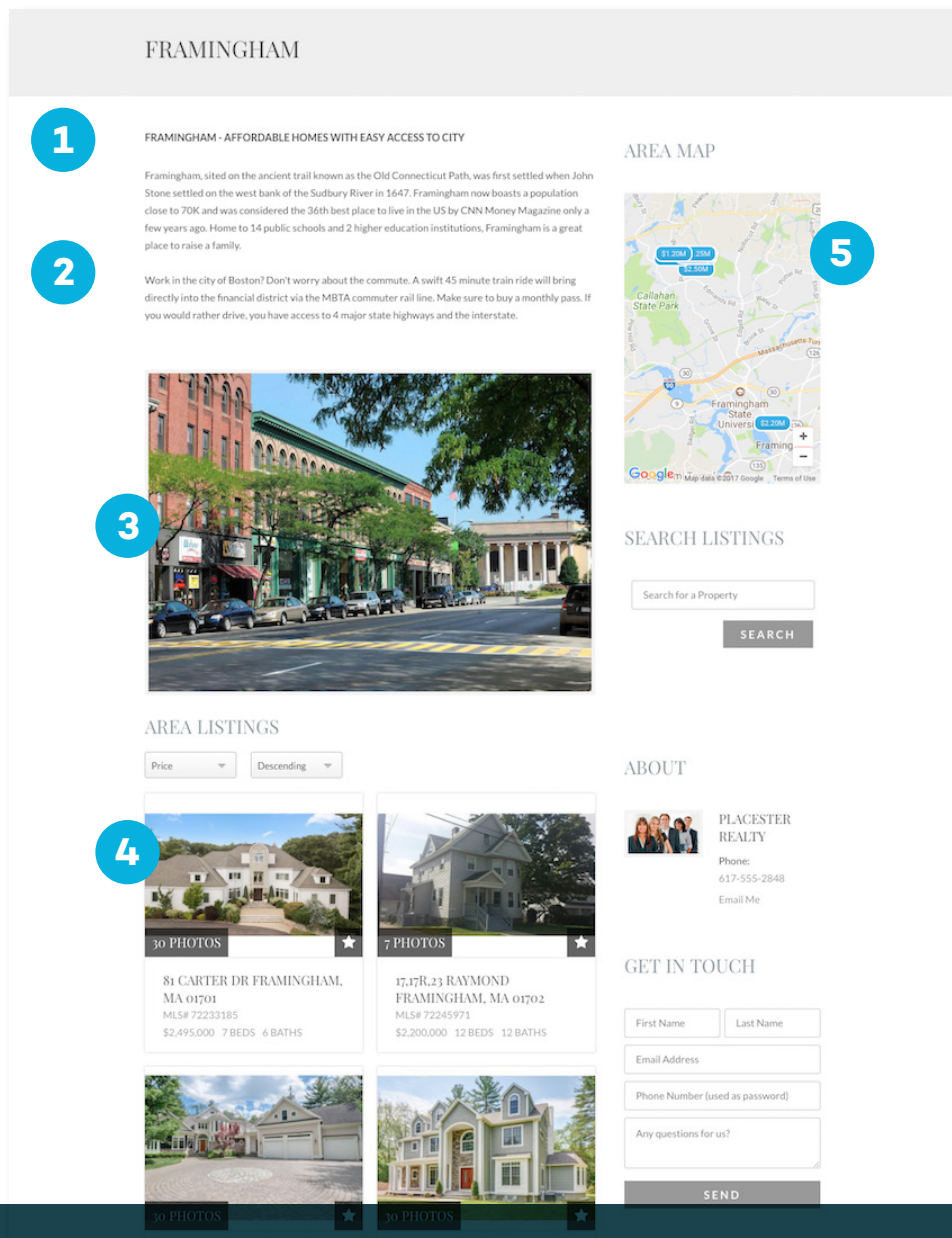
2. The **featured image** at the top adds some visual flavor and makes the article more appealing.

3. Relatively in-depth and detailed **copy with clear sections/headers** allows users to scan the post.

4. The **call to action** at the bottom lets prospective buyers know about an upcoming open house.

5. The agent's **contact info** is featured above said CTA, enhancing the odds the visitor reaches out.

# Crafting the Perfect Community Page



1. The **main page header/title** helps visitors navigate to their neighborhood of interest.
2. A **descriptive paragraph** or two about the area helps paint a picture about what it's like to live there.
3. A compelling **image of the community** helps browsers get an understanding of what the area is like.
4. **Featured listings for sale** in the community also allow visitors to peruse homes in the market.
5. The "bonus" content on the right — **map search, search bar, and form** — make the page fully optimized.



# What an Ideal About Page Looks Like

ARE YOU A MEMBER? [LOGIN](#) [REGISTER](#)

PLACESTER®

617-555-2848 [EMAIL ME](#)


HOME BUYERS RESOURCES SELLERS LUXURY CONDOS 1M+ HOMES UNDER 650K AREAS ABOUT BLOG ROI VIRTUAL TOUR

LOCAL VENDORS QUINCY CUSTOM HOME VAL

5

AGENT INSIGHT

1



JANE STEVENS

Cell:  
617-555-5555

Email Me

GET IN TOUCH

First Name

Last Name

Email Address

Phone Number (used as password)

Any questions for us?

SEND

4

ABOUT JANE STEVENS

2

Twenty years ago, Jane traveled through New Mexico on a cross country trip with her husband. Two months later, she packed her car again--this time, to move to Santa Fe permanently. After working first as a licensed Coldwell Banker agent and then as an associate broker at Sunset Properties, Jane founded Verdi Real Estate in 1999. To date, Jane has helped hundreds of buyers find their dream homes and negotiated the best possible price for the properties she represents.

BACKGROUND

3

Before earning her real estate license, Jane graduated from the University of South Carolina, beginning her professional life as an interior decorator. Jane has incorporated this expertise into her practice, using staging techniques to boost saleability and highlight the potential of the residential properties she represents.

INTERESTS

In addition to her work in real estate, Jane serves as a board member at the Santa Fe Education Foundation, where she advocates for children from low-income families.

SEARCH LISTINGS

Search for a Property

SEARCH

1. The **headshot** is featured prominently atop the page, along with the agent's contact information.
2. **Detail-filled paragraphs** help visitors get to know the agent as a person.
3. **Certifications and designations** the agent holds are featured beneath the main "about me" copy.

4. Again, the inclusion of a **form** increases the agent's chances of capturing visitors' contact info.
5. The **nav bar** remains a constant on this page and others, making it easy for users to click around.

# Chapter 1:

# Developing Your Responsive Website

If you're reading this ebook, chances are you have some issues with your real estate website design and want some assistance. Whether you decide to toss your current site in the digital trash and start over from square one, or redesign your current site, we can help.

*Let's begin by diagnosing what ailments your existing website may be suffering from:*

- **Unresponsive Design:** This is often the most glaring error found on agents' websites today. With the popularity of iPhones, Androids, iPads, and other mobile devices, you can't afford to have an online presence that only looks good on PCs. Most home searches happen on smartphones and tablets today, so don't fall behind on this important tech trend.
- **Inability to Easily Edit:** If you had your website built by a designer, chances are you have the ability to make some minor changes here and there to your site. But if you want to make larger changes, like repositioning your navigation bar or altering the homepage layout, you likely need your original designer or another freelancer to help. You shouldn't have to rely on someone else to help you modify your site whenever you need to make a change.
- **Confusing Navigation:** If users can't quickly and easily find the content on your site they most want to access — such as your “About” and team member pages, or community pages for specific neighborhoods — they won't hang around long enough to learn about your value proposition and how you can possibly help their home buying or selling journey.
- **Dated Website Layout:** We're a couple decades into the 21st century, and website design has advanced over the years. If your site features plain, unenticing fonts, clip art, or ancient-looking calls to action, it's time to breathe new life into the foundation of your online marketing strategy.

Whatever the reasons are for overhauling your web presence, just know it's more than worth it to reinvest in your real estate website.

# Understanding How to Modify Your Responsive Website

Many agents earn business from referrals through colleagues and associates, real estate portals like Zillow and Trulia, and paid ads on Google and social.

But before referrals commit to an agent, or once a potential lead clicks an ad, they want to learn more about the real estate professional they're about to contact. That means your website is the first stop on their research list.

*Here's a comprehensive, 5-step checklist that will vastly improve your website design and make your online presence more attractive to prospects:*

## 1. Define Your Goals

What do you want your website to help you with specifically? Do you want it to simply act as a digital business card for your agency? Do you want it to make you a go-to resource in your market? Do you want to get some or most of your leads from it? Once you understand what you hope to accomplish with your site, you'll know how to structure each and every page, and understand what kinds of content you'll need to create for it.

## 2. Find a Website Provider

By "provider," we mean either a reputable designer — ideally one who has experience developing websites for agents — or a turn-key solution. Getting an easy-to-design site from an affordable real estate website provider that offers pre-made, mobile-friendly themes and offers lead capture and MLS listing integration could be your best bet, if you prefer not to have to explain all of your site needs to an individual designer.

## 3. Familiarize Yourself

What's the point of getting a modern real estate website if you don't master all of its bells and whistles? Take the time to learn your website setup inside and out. Understand how you can add, edit, and improve pages within your site's content management system (CMS). Learn how you can sync your site with your email marketing software (CRM) and metrics tool (most likely Google Analytics) so you can track the performance and progress of your real estate site content.



#### 4. Create Lots of Value

Speaking of content, your website won't live up to your expectations if you don't fill it with tons of interesting, informative, search-optimized pages written with your niche audience in mind. Build community pages that outline all of the unique features that make your market desirable. Develop area pages that feature listings for each neighborhood. Write blog posts that lay out buying and selling concepts in easy to understand terms for your visitors.

#### 5. Re-launch Your Website

Once this foundational content is in place for your website and you feel comfortable with your plan to update it in the weeks and months ahead, it's time to publish. Want to know a secret? No agent's site will be perfect at the time of launch. As long as you have the "basics" nailed down — clean-looking pages with SEO-friendly copy, brand information, and visuals — you will have set yourself up for long-term success.

You'll feel a rightfully earned sense of accomplishment once you reach this step of the process . . . but remember:

***This is just the beginning of your site redesign journey.***

Now you can turn your attention to building out the core website pages that will help you generate more (and higher-quality) leads.





# The Importance of Responsive Design

## 10 Statistics About Mobile-Friendly Websites

5x

Internet users are **5 times** more likely to exit a brand's website that isn't responsive.

— Google

8/10

**Eight in 10** consumers leave websites that don't display properly on their mobile devices.

— Adobe

68%

**68% of small business owners** noted they have responsive websites for their brands.

— Clutch

48%

**48% of consumers** think brands without responsive sites don't care about customers.

— Google

59%

**59% of smartphone users** expect companies to make their websites mobile-friendly.

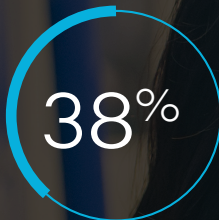
— Forrester

2/3

Mobile devices now account for nearly **two of every three minutes** spent online.

— comScore





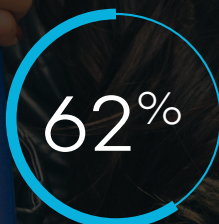
**38% of internet users** will stop engaging with sites with unattractive layouts.

— *Adobe*



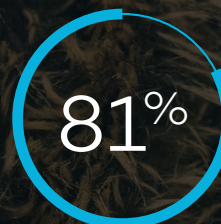
**40% of users** will choose a different search result if the first one isn't responsive.

— *Skillcrush*



**62% of companies with mobile-friendly websites** reported increased sales.

— *Econsultancy*



**81% of marketing professionals** said their brands had responsive websites set up.

— *Adobe*





# The 5 Ways Placester Gets you More Leads

[WATCH THE WEBINAR](#)

# Chapter 2:

## Creating Essential Website Pages

Let's jump ahead. Your website is live (or re-launched), and now it's time to expand your digital footprint.

There is no one right way to begin fleshing out your website with new content. What is necessary, though, is publishing at least one new page or blog post each and every week.

*Here are some examples of the kinds of content you should create first:*

- **Build area pages featuring your listings:** Showcase properties in certain neighborhoods and micro-communities within your housing market to simplify the home search for buyers who visit your website.
- **Produce several blog post series:** Publish one new article for each series every month, which can eliminate the need for constant blog content brainstorm sessions (and save you time and energy).
- **Build a resource page with downloadable assets:** You have real estate expertise. Share your knowledge in market reports, trend guides, homeowner's checklists, and other content you can put behind a lead capture form (more on that in the next chapter).
- **Offer virtual tours of your/your agency's listings:** Tools like Matterport and iGuide make it easier than ever for agents to show 3D and blueprint tours of their listings. So, take advantage of these trendy platforms.
- **Spotlight client reviews, testimonials, and ratings:** Solutions like RealSatisfied allow agents to share star ratings and short blurbs featuring praise from clients. As a bonus, this software syncs with Placester websites.

Your creativity is the only limit for how many different types of pages you create for your real estate website. Sure, the ones we've listed above are "standard." But that doesn't mean you can't produce additional pages that other agents don't have.

On that note, it's smart to check out the websites of your local competitors to see if **a)** they have engaging website content like you do, and **b)** if their sites look just as good on iPhones, iPads, and Androids as they do on desktops and laptops (if they don't, that's a big plus for you!).

## Creating Engaging Content For Mobile And Desktop

“But I’m not a content creator! I don’t know what I’m doing!” If this is what you’re thinking, you can breathe easy: Creating original pages and posts for your website that look and read well on both desktop and mobile actually isn’t that hard in this day and age.

Google “**how to write a blog post**” or “how to create a website graphic” and you’ll find hundreds of articles. Here are the key tips and takeaways that you’ll find in most of them:

- **Copy notable content pros:** Do you know how many blogs there are featuring incredible content (like Placester’s Real Estate Marketing Academy, for example — hint)? Mimic the types of posts and article structures these brands and bloggers use for their content on your own website. Your content focus will certainly differ from theirs, but why not get some inspiration from companies and individuals who have proven they know how to create highly interactive and informative content for their audiences?
- **Experiment with new content:** Never settle. That’s a mantra that should apply to all parts of your real estate business, but especially for your website marketing. Continually identify new kinds of content you can create for your site (like chatbot prompts, polls/quizzes, and GIFs) and monitor the metrics for those pages over the course of weeks and months. The pages and content types that “win” are the ones that drive more and more traffic to your web presence. Those that “lose” are the ones that fail to do so.
- **Create “snackable” content:** While your website needs lots of relatively lengthy pages to help you get found via search engines (such as Google or Bing), don’t forget about the benefits of “snackable” content. For instance, writing 200-word blog posts that feature a handful of images or a high-production-value video can instantly grab your visitors’ attention on both mobile and desktop. Just be sure these articles provide lots of value, since they’re so short.
- **Use heat-mapping software:** Heat-mapping tools provide a visual representation of where your visitors scroll and click the most and where they spend the most time on a given website page on both desktop and mobile. This is helpful for deciding where to place call-to-action text/buttons, figuring out how to move around links in your navigation bar, and determining how to structure blog posts. Once you know where your users click, you can make sure high-converting and engaging assets (like promotional videos, for example) are placed exactly where they’ll be seen.

Develop interesting and helpful content you can regularly track and improve upon: That’s how you achieve your real estate marketing and sales goals. The more time and energy you spend on this content creation and analysis, the more savvy you’ll become (and more leads you’ll generate).



# Words of Website Design Wisdom from the Professionals: Tips and Tricks for Agents



## Homepage

“It’s important not to overload your homepage (or any page, for that matter), with calls to action (CTAs).

Pick one or two and focus on those. If you have too many, you’ll create a tremendous amount of noise for users and that will lead to confusion.”

**Ross Kimbarovsky**  
CEO, **Crowdspring**



## Visuals

“Full-width photos should be used as hero images (large and appealing headers) to get that initial “wow” factor. That said, don’t resort to using stock photography. It simply cannot represent your brand or values like original photography can.”

**Laura Ure**  
CEO, **Keenability**



## Solutions

“Avoid labels such as ‘services’ and ‘solutions. If you have one page listing all of your services, it will never rank. Avoid making a ‘services’ page unless it links to other, search optimized pages for each service.”

**Andy Crestodina**  
Co-Founder, Orbit Media



## A/B Tests

“When conducting A/B tests, make sure that your business is making incremental changes. Trying to measure the influence of multiple different elements at once will complicate your ability to confirm which element triggered the change.”

**Jeremy Ellens**  
Co-Founde, Yazamo



## User Experience

“Good [UX] will bear itself out in longer time spent on a page/site, higher volumes of inbound links, and a healthy amount of social shares. These factors are seen as indications of quality, and rewarded by search engines.”

**Gabriel Shaoolian**  
CEO & Founder, Blue Fountain

## Chapter 3:

# Optimizing Your Entire Web Presence

Once your core content is in place, it's time for the third stage of your design process: making sure that what you put on your website is what your target customers want to see.

Let's break down this website optimization process into two distinct phases. First up is ensuring each site page “speaks” to your niche home buyer and/or seller audience (in other words, ensuring your pages are built to inform and convert visitors):

- **Always refer back to your customer personas:** Put yourself in the shoes of the clients you work with most often — whether that's first-time home owners, multi-family buyers or high-end, Baby Boomer sellers — to determine how to write to and connect with that audience. Think about their traits: Who they are demographically, what motivates their buying/selling decisions, what home amenities are must-haves, etc. — then develop content that addresses their wants and needs. Interview past clients or people in your sphere of influence to discover the personal characteristics and housing desires that will shape what you write about.
- **Consider what information will engage them:** More and more buyers and sellers go online to discover details about homes they may want to buy, or find agents who can help them sell. So, it's vital to become your audience's go-to educational resource. Again, think of the types of content that will resonate most with them — how-to videos, educational infographics, data-packed reports — and craft those kinds of assets for your agency website.
- **Determine what kinds of visuals to incorporate:** According to a Social Media Examiner report, 37% of marketers say visuals are their most important marketing asset. Why? Because we live in the 21st century, and people are constantly being distracted online. This means you need to capture their attention quickly — otherwise, that attention veers off into the endless noise of the internet. Figure out what kinds of images and videos compel visitors to stay on your site; and focus your attention on collecting, producing and featuring more over time.
- **Offer content that will compel them to share their info with you:** As we mentioned in Chapter 2, lead capture forms are essential to building up your lead contact list. The concept is simple, and here's an example of how it works: You offer sellers who visit your site the chance to get an in-person listing presentation. In order for someone to sign up, they need to fill out a form with a few pieces of contact information and other details you'd like to gather. When they take action, you receive notification of their housing preference and meeting request all in one fell swoop.

Creating content may seem like the most difficult component of your online marketing. But if you accomplish this feat, your website metrics — not to mention your lead capture totals — will steadily improve.

## Getting Your Site Content to Rank for Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

After this phase of optimization is complete, it's time to think about SEO and how you can boost the chances of your site being featured on search engines.

Search engine optimization has evolved a lot over the years. Today the algorithms associated with SEO are intricate, allowing users of these search engines to easily and quickly find the information they're looking for; often in milliseconds.

*Here are five simple steps to ensure your pages and posts look high-quality in the eyes of Google:*

- **Amplify your content with relevant keywords:** Repeated use of the right keywords **doesn't affect a website's SEO value as much** as it used to, but that's still a part of the SEO equation. What's important is to only add in keywords where they fit naturally. For example, every time you mention "homes for sale," "home prices," or "real estate" on your site, simply add in your market name directly before or after those terms (for example, "Boston real estate"), so you can enhance your chances of ranking for them in search.
- **Target "low-hanging fruit" keywords to start:** These keywords are ones that a) are searched pretty frequently each month by your audience (i.e. 100+ times) and b) have low to moderate competition (something you can **determine using Google's Keyword Planner**). Start by adding these keywords to several of your website's pages, and make sure you add more timely, relevant content with the same keywords over time so that Google views you as an expert on those topics. Use a simple spreadsheet to keep track of which keywords you're trying to "own."
- **Complete your meta tags, titles, and descriptions:** The technical part of on-page SEO may seem a little tedious at first. But once you get the hang of it, you'll understand its importance and find it easy to fill in. For each page on your site, you'll have **meta tags, titles, and descriptions** you'll need to enter, which describe your page in a short amount of words. For instance, the max character count for meta descriptions is roughly 160 characters. This is the description Google searchers will see beneath the title of your page.
- **Email your primary lead list at least once per week:** Your primary email list should consist of top leads that you've met in person or collected through your website lead capture forms, who can be added to a regularly scheduled drip campaign. Email that list at least once a week to keep potential customers engaged and visiting your website often. The more clicks you get to indexed pages on your website, the higher those pages will rise in search engine results pages and, in turn, generate more organic clicks down the line.



- **Share your content on social media and YouTube:** Optimizing your website for search doesn't stop at just your site. You can also promote your website on channels like Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, and YouTube to increase your brand exposure and get more traffic. Email should be your primary promotional tool to improve your click-throughs, but social media can also add some extra SEO juice to your strategy. Because YouTube is owned by Google, videos factor into Google search results — so it's an especially important platform to incorporate into your real estate marketing strategy.

There is no secret sauce to winning at SEO today. The rough formula to succeed at search is “time + engaging site content + audience and keyword relevance.” The moment you begin publishing lots of content to your site is the moment when your SEO strategy begins.

While it may take months to see the fruits of your labor, keep in mind that your patience will be rewarded with a steady stream of increased traffic and leads over time.





# 15 Types of Content & Services You Can Put Behind Lead Capture Forms

## **1. Homeowner's Checklist**

List out a couple dozen homeowner's chores for clients you help purchase listings.

## **2. Buyer's or Seller's Guide**

Detail modern buying and/or selling best practices.

## **3. Home Sales/Prices Report**

Help buyers stay up-to-date on market trends in areas they plan to purchase homes.

## **4. Community News Update**

Discuss the latest happenings in your market that sellers and buyers would find informative.

## **5. Housing Trends Infographic**

Provide updates on general real estate market trends in your community for leads.

## **6. End-of-Year Market Recap**

Highlight important housing market statistics and figures in a year-end roundup.

## **7. Business Review Collection**

Review restaurants, stores, music venues, movie theaters, and other establishments nearby.

## **8. Local Influencer Interviews**

Conduct Q&As with locals who may have something to say that would interest your audience.

## **9. Market Explainer Videos**

Record videos that detail what's going on in your market that can inform leads' decision-making.

## **10. Repurposed Blog Roundup**

Turn a series of blog posts into a collection that gathers several tips and insights into one place.

## **11. Comparative Market Analysis**

Offer your home seller prospects the chance to get a free CMA from your real estate agency.

## **12. Listing Presentation Offer**

Allow visitors to fill out a form to request an in-person presentation on how you'd sell their home.

## **13. In-Person Buyer Consultation**

Similarly, create a lead capture form that allows home buyer prospects the chance to request a face-to-face meeting.

## **14. Coffee Chat with Prospects**

For top-of-funnel leads not ready to buy or sell, offer the chance for an informal chat at a local cafe.

## **15. Home Valuation Services**

Supply your visitors with an offer to conduct a valuation of their property, prior to listing it on the market.





# Improve your website design and lead capture with our tools and services.

- Beautiful, mobile-friendly websites
- Custom lead capture forms and pages
- MLS integration and listing pages
- Lead management and email tools
- Content marketing library and site refreshes



Get in touch with us today.

**REQUEST A DEMO**