

Online is changing real estate advertising landscape

Consumer buying patterns are constantly evolving, particularly the manner in which people are looking to buy homes, as the internet has revolutionised the way homebuyers view and search for property.



According to a study carried out by Google and the National Association of Realtors in America, about 90% of prospective buyers use the internet to search for properties, with 52% indicating that the internet was the first step taken during the property buying decision. Furthermore, the majority of these, about 70%, found their agent on-line.

So in a constantly evolving and dynamic real estate environment, does this mean the end of the agent-client relationship, as we know it? Not so, says Dr Andrew Golding, chief executive of the Pam Golding Property group. "The internet is simply changing the way of advertising and promotion for agents and clients.

"Very few, in fact in percentage terms hardly any, prospective home purchasers make the major decision to buy a property without physically viewing it, often several times, and examining it thoroughly with regard to position, condition and to generally feel the ambience of what it may be like to live in the home.

"However, today's consumers are increasingly tech-savvy and informed regarding the residential property market in general. Using a range of devices including computers, mobile phones and tablets, the internet is very often the mechanism that most buyers use to begin their search, perusing neighbourhoods and properties.

"Then typically, as they qualify and more clearly define their search, they contact the relevant agent to pursue various options and commence on the path to acquiring the property of their choice. In this regard, the agent-client interaction and relationship is still critical, as marketing a property has as much to do with the personal touch and specific local area knowledge and expertise that an agent contributes as the selected media to display a property."

Gaining the attention of internet browsers seeking the right property to suit their needs is of paramount importance in the highly competitive real estate environment.

New website narrows down search

Which is why Pam Golding Properties - which originally launched the first South African real estate website in 1995 - has completely redeveloped its current site by introducing a new website with a number of innovations, all designed to ensure an effortless client user experience.

"The way people view and search for properties on the web has advanced significantly over the past decade. Today's buyer wants to access information about areas and properties quickly and easily, so the site has been designed entirely around key user journeys to answer this need," continues Golding.

Currently the PGP website receives over 300,000 visits each month from over 200,000 visitors from in excess of 200 countries around the globe, spending an average of just over five minutes on each visit - an indication of the attention-span which needs to be harnessed rapidly in order to get the message across.

"As one of the key characteristics of today's market is for buyers to seek homes with easy access to schools and the workplace, we have introduced a draw search facility where visitors to the website can simply 'draw' a search for properties in a specific location, and easily view all the options available. This can be even further narrowed down and refined by, for example, a specific school search, which enables you to select houses for sale or to rent within a 6km radius from a school, in increments of one kilometre. Moreover, if you sign up for alert notices, we will let you know as soon as a property is listed in your draw area."

The draw search has been specially designed so that users can be selective and clearly define a very specific location within an area, for example a certain part of Stellenbosch, Pretoria, Durban or Port Elizabeth - or any town or area. "You can also draw a location that straddles several areas, such as prime parts of Mouille Point, the V&A Waterfront, Fresnaye and City Bowl. Alternatively, you may prefer to choose a section along the Atlantic Seaboard, which includes Camps Bay and only the first part of Bantry Bay, and so on.

"Other new features include the introduction of a Pinboard, so you can compile your own personal selection of your favourite properties and immediately share these with family and friends. This is simple to use - the Pinboard shows you the properties you've added as you go along and you can remove, add or share these at the quick click of a button.

"Apart from this, a range of existing, updated features includes choosing a property to suit your own particular lifestyle, preferred price range or location, or a broad variety of new residential developments and estates, while a map search provides quick access to a host of properties on the rest of the African continent as well as abroad," concludes Golding.

For more information, go to www.pamgolding.co.za.

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