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featurestory

As IDX Looms, Expert Says National Sites Remain 'Very Important'

The Internet Data Exchange (IDX) is nothing less than “the most important development in real estate since the introduction of the Multiple Listing Service (MLS),” according to Brian Larson, who knows a thing or two about the importance of the MLS.

Larson, as it happens, is president and general counsel of the Regional MLS of Minnesota, Inc., and in that role has become a national industry expert on IDX, also known as broker reciprocity. And like a growing number of his colleagues around the nation, Larson is sounding the bell that, if you're a real estate professional, you'd be wise to get ready for IDX.

The new national policy, which takes effect January 1, 2002 — less than 60 days from now — is mandated by the National Association of Realtors and requires the nation's Multiple Listing Services to provide a way for brokers to share their property listings with other brokers' Web sites.

“IDX extends the Multiple Listing Service to the Internet so that a broker can be the source for *all* listing information,” Larson explained.

Which raises an interesting question: If brokers have access to all the listings, what does this mean for national listing sites such as MSN HomeAdvisor and Realtor.com?

Aggregators Have 'Powerful Relationships'

Larson has spent a good deal of time studying this aspect of IDX as well — and those who turn to national sites like MSN HomeAdvisor for vital listing exposure, leads, and abundant content, will find encouragement in his conclusion.

“National sites are very important,” he said, “and IDX does *not* make aggregator Web sites obsolete for two reasons. First, some consumers are relocating from areas where a brokerage firm is unknown, and second, some aggregators (such as MSN HomeAdvisor) have unique and powerful relationships with other important Web sites.”

And in MSN HomeAdvisor's case, it is a powerful relationship indeed.

As the home and real estate channel on MSN — a network that draws nearly 70 million visitors each month — a broker or agent with their listings on MSN HomeAdvisor is literally just a few clicks away from millions of potential buyers.

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BRIAN LARSON
PRESIDENT &
GENERAL COUNSEL
REGIONAL MLS OF
MINNESOTA, INC.



MSN HomeAdvisor is the Internet's most complete guide for finding everything about the home, helping consumers address every home-related decision. Through MSN HomeAdvisor, real estate professionals from around the country receive thousands of leads every day from the site's millions of monthly visitors.

More information on MSN HomeAdvisor can be found at www.homeadvisor.com

insidestuff

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business**brief**

MSN HomeAdvisor Traffic Tops Realtor.com ... *But That's Not All*

For the third time, MSN HomeAdvisor traffic bested Realtor.com according to a September report from Jupiter Media Metrix. But even though MSN HomeAdvisor had 2.93 million unique users to Realtor.com's 2.85 million, that's only half the story according to MSN HomeAdvisor officials.

Although the traffic numbers are an important barometer, there's another issue real estate professionals need to be aware of: only 9.2 percent of Web users go to *both* MSN HomeAdvisor *and* Realtor.com in any given month (see graphic).

Which means if your listings are on only one of these sites, millions of consumers each month will likely never see your homes for sale. MSN HomeAdvisor's real estate partners benefit from the more than 7,300 customers the site sends to real estate professionals each day.

"More than 50 percent of Internet users visit a Microsoft site each month," said Matt Heinz, lead product manager for MSN HomeAdvisor. "If your listings are on just one real estate Web site, you are missing out on literally millions of potential buyers."

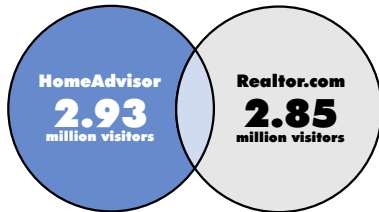
How Does MSN Promote You and Your Listings? Millions of Ways

Just by putting your listings on MSN HomeAdvisor, your homes for sale are just clicks away from the 70 million visitors to MSN, the most popular Internet destination in the world.

But if that's not enough, here are just a few of the innovative things MSN HomeAdvisor and MSN are also doing to support its real estate partners — all in an effort to bring even greater numbers of leads to real estate professionals:

- Just last month, MSN created a "Realtor Discussion Forum" specifically designed to encourage real estate professionals to discuss issues, exchange ideas and referrals, and communicate with fellow Realtors across town or across the country. Real estate professionals can post messages and pictures, send referrals and discuss trends, and ways to create additional business opportunities. And judging by the overwhelming response to the new forum, Realtors have a lot to say — in just one day, nearly 1,200 real estate pros signed up to participate in the forum. Sign up today at:
<http://communities.msn.com/RealtorDiscussionForum>

Why Brokers Need Broad National Presence



Only 9.2% of buyers visit both leading national sites

Source: Jupiter Media Metrix, Sept. 2001

Let HomeAdvisor help lead your company to

more customers and increased

profits. Call us today at (800) 424-2489

or e-mail us at

listings@microsoft.com



partnerupdate



Industry Exec Shares Ideas, Trends and the Future's Best Bets

Editor's Note: MSN HomeAdvisor News recently caught up with Bob Hale, president and CEO of the Houston Association of Realtors (HAR). Hale, who oversees one of the largest associations and Multiple Listing Services in the country, has been a longtime advocate of the Internet and placed the listings of the HAR MLS on MSN HomeAdvisor more than three years ago.

What is the Houston Association of Realtors' (HAR) philosophy regarding the Internet?

The Houston Association of Realtors, beginning in 1996, recognized the critical importance of the Internet and HAR has played a crucial role in Internet and technology services provided to its 14,000 members since that time. HAR's mission is to "help its members achieve ongoing profitability" and one important role it can play in accomplishing this is to drive consumers to our Realtor members and their listings. In an effort to accomplish this, five years ago HAR established www.HAR.com.

Does your board believe exclusive listing agreements are in the best interests of its broker and agent members?

Our board of directors does not believe in the word "exclusive," but rather the "broadest possible exposure," so HAR Realtor listings are promoted on a variety of national real estate sites, including MSN HomeAdvisor, HoustonChronicle.com, Realtor.com and others. Our brokers want their listings on all the major real estate portals.

Do you think national sites are important?

I believe that the national real estate listing sites such as MSN HomeAdvisor will continue to play important roles in sending consumers to local real estate brokers and agent Web sites, who can then build loyalty and retention with the consumer by providing the consumer all the available listings on their Web site. I am also seeing some local real estate Web sites grow in importance, as an example, www.HAR.com is receiving millions of hits per month.

How has your organization implemented broker reciprocity or Internet Data Exchange (IDX)?

IDX authorizes MLS participants to display the listings of other MLS participants on their public Web sites. HAR provides a "smart framing" IDX solution for our members whereby a Realtor may display all MLS listings on their Web site for \$150 per year and a broker company may display all MLS listings on their Web site for as little as \$50 per month. Currently no broker in Houston has opted out of IDX.



BOB HALE
PRESIDENT & CEO
HOUSTON ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS



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PRESIDENT & CEO
HAR

featurestory

National Sites Continue Vital Role

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“MSN HomeAdvisor is the exclusive real estate channel on all Microsoft Web sites, which consistently rank among the most-visited sites on the Web,” Larson said. “This special relationship yields important consumer traffic,” which in turn yields leads sent directly from MSN HomeAdvisor to real estate professionals.

“Certainly, IDX is going to fundamentally change the way certain aspects of the real estate business operate, but the role of MSN HomeAdvisor remains the same: provide unlimited exposure of listings and drive leads to our real estate partners,” said Matt Heinz, lead product manager for MSN HomeAdvisor.

In addition to offering vast amounts of content — from more than 1.1 million homes for sale, to the ability to obtain a mortgage, to helpful information on schools — sites like MSN HomeAdvisor play another significant role, Larson believes.

For people moving into a new market, “relocating consumers are likely to find one of the major listing aggregators during their search,” yet another reason why brokers will turn to national sites for leads.

MSN Creates Powerful Partnerships

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- MSN and ESPN.com, the world’s leading sports Web site, recently reached an agreement to give consumers access to ESPN’s online sports content through the MSN network of Internet services. In an effort to bring more consumers to MSN, and ultimately to your real estate sites, ESPN.com will be the exclusive sports content provider for MSN. Additionally, MSN services will now be available directly from ESPN.com to the millions of consumers who visit both sites every month.
- MSN recently launched a \$50 million “switcher campaign” with nationwide advertisements and a limited-time promotional offer, designed to persuade consumers to change from their AOL service and sign up for MSN Internet Access. More than 500,000 AOL users have switched to MSN in the past few months.
- A report from Jupiter Media Metrix shows that MSN’s eShop is now the No. 1 shopping portal on the Web. eShop surpassed Yahoo! Shopping by nearly 20 percent to secure the largest reach on the Web. Just one more benefit of having your listings on MSN HomeAdvisor — they’re just a click away from the millions of consumers already familiar with the ease and convenience of shopping on MSN.



BRIAN LARSON

PRESIDENT & GENERAL COUNSEL

REGIONAL MLS OF MINNESOTA, INC.

MSN HomeAdvisor is the Nation’s Best Online Homebuying Site

- Top 100 Web Site
PC Magazine
- Best of the Best
Yahoo! Internet Life
- 100 Best Sites for 2000
Yahoo!
- Web Site of the Month
Family PC
- **Best Homebuying Site**
Gómez Scorecard
Summer 2000
Fall 2000
Winter 2001
Summer 2001
- **Best Overall Homebuying Site**
Yahoo! Internet Life
Annual Gold Star
Site Review