

RE/MAX launched a new Internet strategy using Google Analytics.



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Kristi Graning
Senior Vice President of IT
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ABOUT GOOGLE ANALYTICS

Google's web analytics service enables advertisers and publishers to make their marketing campaigns more efficient and their websites more effective using information Google Analytics provides. Advertisers can increase their return on investment by optimizing online marketing campaigns, tracking referral sources, improving web design and content, and identifying visitor preferences. The intuitive interface of Google Analytics makes it easy to segment customers, identify top performing ad campaigns, and understand user preferences.

For more information, visit
www.google.com/analytics

The RE/MAX franchise network is a global real estate system operating in 62 countries with more than 5,800 independently owned offices and 114,000 member sales associates who lead the industry in providing real estate services in residential, commercial, referral, relocation, and asset management.

Founded in 1973, RE/MAX provides an entrepreneurial environment that attracts the best agents by providing maximum compensation, advanced support services, and the freedom agents prefer in order to succeed. Since then, the company has continued to provide innovative services to help its members, including relocation and asset management, commercial investment, an international referral network, advanced training courses, state-of-the-art technological tools, Internet and extranet websites, and national television advertising campaigns.

RE/MAX was the first – and is still the only – real estate network to develop and maintain a satellite TV network dedicated to real estate professionals, which is available for viewing in all of the firm's offices and in the homes of individual agents. As a result of its constant innovation and dedication to supporting its affiliates, RE/MAX has grown every month for more than 32 years.

Challenge

Increasingly, the real estate market has moved online. A 2004 study by the National Association of Realtors indicated that 74 percent of consumers begin the home buying process online, and 75 percent expect their agent to be Internet-savvy. In fact, according to industry analysts Borrell Associates, online now accounts for more than one-third of all consumer media time – making it more difficult for advertisers to reach consumers solely through such traditional media as television and print.

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As results of this online shift, RE/MAX announced an ambitious new Internet strategy in August 2005. At the heart of this new strategy is the ability for consumers to view all property listings on www.remax.com, whether they are RE/MAX listings or not. This new capability is intended to put more control of listings and lead generation in the hands of RE/MAX agents. As part of the online strategy, RE/MAX turned to Google Analytics for help in gathering data for its online analysis.

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Jeanna Bash
RE/MAX Web Analyst

“The goal is to help people find a house and select an agent,” says Kristi Graning, Senior Vice President of IT and e-Business. “In the past, our primary focus was on how many visitors came to our site. But now, consumers are going online so quickly, we want to know more about their behavior in order to serve them better. For instance: Why people are coming to our site? Where they are coming from? And what they do once they get there?”

The insight that Google Analytics provides into online consumer behavior not only confirms many RE/MAX online initiatives; it is also leading to new opportunities. Prior to using Google Analytics, the company relied mostly on focus groups to gauge consumer behavior and interests. But focus groups are time-consuming and limited in scope and region. They also lack real-world data.

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Results

The RE/MAX site gets more than 2 millions visits a month. With Google Analytics, Kristi Graning and her team were able to see that more than 90 percent of visitors who came from search engines used search terms that included “remax” in their search query, and about 70 percent of those visitors subsequently searched for properties on the site.

New site design to maximize opportunities for agents

“We knew that our marketing and TV branding campaigns had worked, since people are so familiar with our name, but now we need to look at other marketing efforts we may be missing that could help drive even more qualified traffic,” Graning says. “One obvious example is our ability to expand the keywords we’re employing to help searchers find and engage remax.com.”

Google Analytics also helped confirm the importance of moving the property search capability directly to the home page. In the past, RE/MAX passed these prospects off to another site. As part of the new Internet initiative, the company will maintain its own property search capabilities, and track these leads to agents.

“One of the biggest potentials we see with Google Analytics is the ability to measure our success driving leads to our agents, and the opportunity to eliminate some of the extra fees agents have been paying for lead generation,” observes RE/MAX Web Analyst Jeanna Bash. “In the past, we could never track the leads that went to agents from remax.com, because we passed off these searches to Realtor.com. Now, in addition to allowing consumers to search on all listings, we will be able to capture leads, pass them directly to our agents, and track and measure our lead to sale conversion rate. This will help increase our value for agents and consumers.”

Testing for continual improvements

In addition to helping with the new Internet strategy and direction, Google Analytics will also help guide smaller, continual improvements in site design and functionality. For instance, the RE/MAX site offers links to partners that provide complementary services – such as mortgages and moving – as well as informational sections that provide tips and advice. By testing changes in content descriptions and placement of links, the web team can test and track improvements in click through and referrals.

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Constance Slippy
Senior Manager of Web Services

Google Analytics will also provide guidance on appropriate technology for the site. Tracking the type of technology used by visitors – such as computing platforms and speed of Internet connections – will guide RE/MAX as it adds new functionality, such as multimedia files that allow potential buyers to interactively tour properties from their computer.

Data to discover new business opportunities

Google Analytics is also helping discover new corporate opportunities for the RE/MAX franchise business. “By seeing where visitors are coming from, we will be able to gain early insight into areas around the world where it might make sense to pursue franchise opportunities,” says Slippy. “We have already noticed several hot spots that we were previously unaware of. By visualizing where traffic is coming from geographically, these opportunities are jumping out at us.”

