

# Using the Internet to Your Advantage

**T**he Internet is an amazing tool, and it is particularly essential for today's real-estate consumer. Most savvy consumers, whether they're in the market to purchase a new home or are thinking about selling, are searching the Internet for facts, figures, and information.

There are many benefits that come with using the Internet to educate yourself about and prepare for your future real-estate transaction, and I strongly encourage you to do so with the assistance of your Realtor. Not only will an Internet presence help market your home to hundreds of thousands of buyers, it will also play a part in our global effort to "go green" by saving paper. Through the Internet, relevant information about a home for sale is available electronically to buyers and sellers everywhere, saving all parties in the transaction time and money.

## The Internet is an amazing tool

As Realtors, we gauge activity in the market analysis of your home for sale not only by phoned in and scheduled showing appointments, but by watching the number of "hits" or "online" viewings on any given day. It is remarkable just how much time buyers and sellers spend previewing properties for sale over the Internet.

What may have been yesterday's preliminary showing at your home may now be considered a second or even third appearance. When a buyer makes the appointment to physically come to see your property for sale, he or she can be considered serious contenders to purchase your home.

The opportunity for potential buyers to find out the price and location of your home for sale, as well as providing the ability to read descriptive information about its particulars, are just some of the benefits an online presence will afford your transaction. Photographs posted to your listing are a very important component of the online viewing process. They serve as an opportunity to give your buyer a "feel" for the interior of your home and will be the lens by which your home is compared to other homes for sale.

Updating these photos for the season is critical, and this should be a top priority for your Realtor

every few months. Having an online video tour of your property is another preview marketing piece that can alert your potential buyer to more of the detail of your home. Through appealing video, potential buyers will feel as if they have already stood inside your home before they even set foot inside the door!

## Your Realtor will help evaluate the data

Prior to pricing a home for sale or narrowing down the search for a buyer, Realtors spend a significant amount of time transferring real-estate information from various Internet resources to their clients. Your Realtor should be able to give you access to the Multiple Listing Service of Northern Illinois (MLSNI) through his or her own web site, and this will give you the most accurate local data.

However, I do urge caution when using many of the Internet "tools" that are available to general consumers. If you're currently searching Internet real-estate web sites for a new home or to get comparables, be careful. Data changes constantly. Real estate for sale is similar to the stock market. It is critical to remember that a home for sale is much like a commodity, and its value is determined in many different ways (some of them often very subtle) by the buyer in today's real estate market.

With any home sale, your Realtor's knowledge of the area will help you interpret and evaluate the local market data so that you can make the best and most financially sound decision possible on your upcoming transaction. Particulars on neighborhoods, subdivisions, area amenities, local government, businesses, restaurants, shopping, seasonal events, and general information about the area are all facets that play an important part in your real-estate decision. A skilled and knowledgeable Realtor can provide this information through graphs, charts, and maps with the help of the Internet; however, the interpretations and subtleties of a local market will always require qualified human intervention.

## Take advantage of the Internet

Buyers, take advantage of the vast amount of information that is available today on the Internet.



PHOTO: THOMAS BALSAMO

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Understanding the pricing of homes currently on the market and those that have recently sold in your chosen area – and spending time previewing homes via the Internet – will assist you in narrowing down the search for your new home.

Sellers, take advantage of the extreme coverage your home can get on the Internet in order to increase the activity for your listing and potentially bring a buyer to your doorstep faster. Your Realtor can assist you in getting your property the maximum amount of exposure to the general public by using quality photography and listing valuable details about your home for sale.

I encourage you to work with your Realtor to use and interpret the relevant data available on the Internet to research the most recent and up-to-date local real estate information possible. As a marketing tool, the Internet will reach out to the largest pool of buyers possible for the pending sale of your home. The knowledge you receive from working together will prove invaluable, and it will likely increase your opportunity to sell or buy more quickly at the best possible price. 