



THE CHALLENGE OF AN EVER-CHANGING Online universe

AS GERANIUM HOMES' MARKETING DIRECTOR, IT'S MY JOB TO ensure we employ all of the available marketing and research techniques and new technologies to secure our position in the new home marketplace. Over the past five years, we've strived to continuously expand and refresh our online presence. Working with Digital Front Technologies (digitalfront.ca), our web savvy consultants assist us by recommending and implementing a variety of SEO (search engine optimization) and marketing strategies, now expanded to include social media, blogs and e-marketing.

The time and energy we invest in establishing and managing an online presence has definitely paid off – for example, in 2012, we know that 66 per cent of our total number of homebuyers first registered online. And a growing number of those registrants found us through web links and searches.

Digital Front owner, David Kastelic, is my daily contact person and he has recently spearheaded a refresh of our website – geraniumhomes.com. This came about in part because of the growth in the number of people using mobile devices to access the Internet. David says “It is essential that website usability does not limit itself to traditional computers. As much as possible, the same information and services must be available to users regardless of the device they are using.

“Responsive web design and development is a game changer,” he further explains. “It is important to regularly review and update a website to ensure that it can adapt to different mobile viewport devices to prevent the loss of prospective clients. This practice is beneficial to both the client and developer. It effectively

handles fragmentation issues from different types of platforms, devices and frameworks. From 2011 to 2012, we've recorded a 50 per cent increase in site visits by people using various mobile devices.”

One of the key tools we employ is SEO. Whereas traditional advertising combines television, radio, print, signage and direct mail to grab the consumer's attention and direct them to a product or service, on the web businesses rely on search engines. “Ensuring a website gets listed to the leading search engines is done through SEO. Optimizing a website according to search engine standards will warrant a favourable SE ranking, which makes the website ‘easy to find.’ This results in greater brand recognition,” adds Kastelic.

Of course, Geranium not only has a website but maintains a very active social media presence which contributes to a healthy and engaged database. These work hand-in-hand. As Kastelic says, “Websites provide the opportunity to know precisely the kind of people interacting with your brand, and create an opportunity for engagement. However, we can't identify just who each individual is, nor can we reach out and make their experience more valuable, personal and exciting. This is where social media comes in. It helps to build an ongoing relationship between your brand and your potential customers with a deeper level of trust and commitment. While each has a different purpose, they have one common goal – that is to convert more users to customers.”

The notable and ongoing rise in traffic to Geranium's website is a strong indication of our continued success in a thriving, ever changing online universe.

This is part of a series of articles on topics of interest to new-home buyers, authored by Sue Webb Smith, marketing director for Geranium Homes.