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**Winning**

**SEO Strategies  
for  
Real Estate Websites**

by Dynamic Page Solutions

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## Overview of the Search Market for Real Estate

The first thing that real estate professionals need to understand about search engines is that they are constantly making algorithmic changes which makes the objective of ranking for specific keywords a moving target. What may be best practices one year could very likely change in varying degrees the following year. Search engines rank individual pages of websites for keywords, rather than entire sites. However, a website which has many authoritative and highly ranked pages helps to boost the reputation of the website as whole.

Real estate is one of the most competitive verticals on the web for gaining visibility. A primary reason for this is real estate website developers compete for buyer traffic with a handful of competitive keywords. Often, the web technology powering a site is not fully compatible with search engines, compounding the issue.

This eBook is geared toward real estate agents looking to get a leg up in the Internet marketing game. While you don't have to be a web guru to learn search engine optimization (SEO), understanding the basics of how a website functions will greatly help your understanding of SEO best practices. This guide is for beginners, but assumes a very basic knowledge of SEO and how websites work.

MLS database IDX displays are typically housed in iframes. This type of configuration is problematic to search engine crawlers because it's difficult to associate framed content with the page containing the frames. This impacts the ability to index listings that can empower your site with buyer and seller related content. The framed content is far less likely to be included in the index which leaves the website owner with only a few pages to win traffic on. In most cases, a real estate agent with only a few indexable pages will try to go after the keywords with the most traffic. With the release of Google's Penguin algorithm update in April of 2012, including too many keywords on any one page, "keyword stuffing," can cause a penalty and thus no traffic at all.



The best way to solve this issue is to use an indexable IDX solution. With this option, website owners can literally use every listing in their market as a doorway to their site. With Dynamic Page Solutions IDX technology, real estate professionals choose their cities, neighborhoods, or communities, as well as niche topics within cities with which to target web traffic. Each page is optimized for a different keyword and pages can run into the thousands.

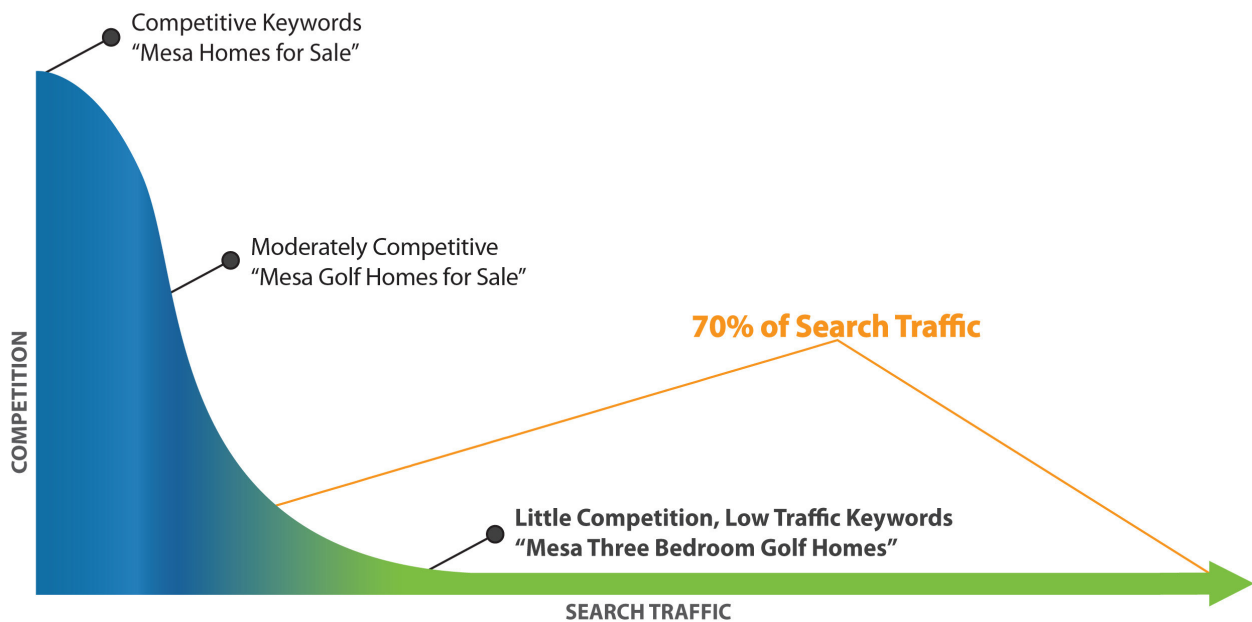


This strategy opens the floodgates for the “long tail” opportunity. Unlike competitive or top terms like [San Diego homes for sale], long tail keywords are broader, but less searched, and therefore less competitive keywords. The key to using this as an overall strategy is sheer numbers. Utilizing all of the listings in your market to compete for traffic is the smart way to go. An example would be [5 bedroom home for sale in San Diego under 500k]. This degree of specificity in keyword searches is growing as Internet users become savvier and understand how to quickly find what they are seeking.

## “Long tail keywords account for 70% of all search engine traffic”

– Wired Magazine

NAR finds that 90% of homebuyers start their search on the Internet, but did you know that NAR also found that 80% of those homebuyers buy through a real estate agent and that 40% of homebuyers first found the home they went on to purchase using the Internet, and not through an agent? Most real estate agents are resigned to using their websites as a digital brochure with no capability of gaining new business from the web. With statistics like this though, you cannot afford to go without a strong web presence! Partnering with a progressive website technology provider that recognizes the unique challenges real estate professionals face is an excellent strategy to begin winning your share of Internet traffic.



## Understanding the Long Tail Advantage

### WEBSITES TYPICALLY FOCUS ON 'PERCEIVED' TOP KEYWORDS

- Study showed 50% of searches were from top 10 keywords (Wired Magazine)
- However, only 18.6% of conversions were from these keywords
- 81% of conversions were from search terms outside of the top 10 (Wired Magazine)

THIS IS THE LONG TAIL!

**57% of Amazon.com sales result from keyword searches outside of the 'popular terms'**

-Wired Magazine

### INTERNET COMPANIES:

Some of the most successful and well known Internet companies have been leveraging the long tail as part of their business strategy for some time. Examples include [eBay](#) (auctions), [Yahoo](#) and [Google](#) (web search), [Amazon](#) (retail) and [iTunes](#) (music & podcasts) and [NetFlix](#) (video rental).

***“A monopoly of the top 1,000 search terms across all search engines, which is impossible, (would) still be missing out on 89.4% of all search traffic.”***

-Hitwise

This is the importance of winning long tail traffic!

### MORE TRAFFIC – BETTER CONVERSIONS:

It is still recommended to optimize for top tier keywords, just be aware that even if you are on page one for the competitive keywords, this only accounts for about 30% of potential traffic. The long tail accounts for the other 70%. The long tail provides infinite doorways to a website as long as the search engines can crawl and index the pages where the long tail keywords exist. With the long tail, there is no need to work tirelessly to get to page one on the competitive keywords alone. In real estate, long tail keywords can be addresses, MLS numbers, school districts, master planned community names, golf course names, and the many variations of “real estate,” such as “houses for sale,” “homes for sale,” “property for sale,” “realty,” “real estate listings,” etc.

Using a technology that can parse MLS data into home buyer categories such as 4-bedrooms, gated community homes, homes with swimming pools, luxury, affordable, condo, townhome and more greatly increases your chances of capturing very targeted traffic. Taking advantage of a sophisticated content management system such as ours will cause a dramatic increase in the amount of web activity you see.



## SEO – What is it and how do I get it?

Search engine optimization is the practice of working to enhance the capability of a site's pages to rank high in the search engine results pages for keywords. Search engine optimization can and should be done both onsite and offsite.



### ONSITE OPTIMIZATION:

When speaking of real estate websites, it's important to use a provider that can handle MLS data and structure pages to take advantage of keywords that are inherent to every listing. Each page should have a unique title to target variations of real estate keywords. Hand-optimizing page titles for thousands of MLS listings could be an extraordinary task but fortunately our technology does this automatically.

All pages that feature keywords and content that are likely to produce traffic should be crawlable by the search engine robots. How pages are interlinked is very important from a user perspective because you want people that click on a link to arrive at a suitable page. For example, a link titled, "3 Bedroom Homes" should point to a page with 3 bedroom homes as an example. How pages are interlinked is very important for the search engines so the relationship between pages can be understood. Inter-site links also distinguish the hierarchy of pages which indicates page prominence to search engines. An example of this is your index page ranking higher than a less-important page such as a privacy policy.

Overuse of internal linking when using keyword anchor text for optimization purposes can get you in the hot seat since Google released Penguin in April of 2012. Dynamic Page Solutions can quickly make global changes to our content management system to keep in synch with search engine algorithm changes. Minimal link depth (how many clicks does it take to get to internal pages) is also a factor in search engine optimization. Using flat website architecture is ideal because it's easier for users to navigate and for the search engines bots to crawl. Most importantly, having every page optimized for a different but semantically connected keyword greatly increases your chances for gaining web traffic overall.



Content on pages, above and beyond MLS listing details is crucial. Prior to the release of the Google algorithm update known as Panda in 2011, the web was overridden with many low quality pages with thin content. Panda is a filter designed to exclude low quality pages from the index. Google has no clear way to define the quality content; the quality is inferred by other factors such as the word count, keywords within the content that are semantically connected with the page title, existence of keyword stuffing and user interaction with pages (including time spent on the page). The numbers of links coming from other sites that point to a particular page and in some cases the number of links pointing to the domain as a whole also contribute to rankings. Writing content that is highly informational and well written increases the likelihood of being seen as quality given the inferred metrics used by Google to judge this.

Keyword usage within the content of your web pages should be kept to a minimum. Use the same key phrase that is in your page title at least once in your article to support the page title and include a few variations of the term as well but stay away from forcing keywords in. It's very easy to come up with content that is not keyword stuffed but still relevant to the page when you take employers, schools, park lands, new construction and master planned community information into account. A minimum of 600 words of content per page is recommended.

Meta keyword tag stuffing went the way of the dinosaur so don't spend a lot of time on this. Meta descriptions however are very important because Google may use this information to pull as a snippet to explain what a particular page is about on the search engine results page. Meta descriptions can also entice a click-through on your result if the description says something compelling. Keep in mind that Dynamic Page Solutions' technology takes care of a tremendous amount of onsite optimization for you. You can even purchase topically relevant articles for your pages you are not interested in writing yourself.

#### OFF SITE OPTIMIZATION:

Off-site optimization has always been an integral part of ranking web pages for keywords. Off-site optimization typically results in links that point to pages on a web site from pages on separate root domains. These are also known as backlinks. Prior to the algorithm filter known as Penguin, the raw numbers of backlinks pointing to a site could manipulate ranking. Post-Penguin, raw numbers can get you in a lot of trouble particularly if you have a great deal of exact match anchor text links that use your "money" keywords such as [City] Homes for Sale or [City] Real Estate. The Internet neighborhoods where you get your links also matter. If the bulk of backlinks that point to your site are from low authority, low quality and generic neighborhoods, this could be a spam



flag to search engines. Bygone is the day when the sheer volume of links was a top ranking factor. Quantity can still have a positive impact but it's the how, what, and where that is primarily taken into account.

Backlinks that originate from reputable and authoritative sites are the most valuable. An authoritative site is one that has developed a high trust factor with the search engines due to popularity and longevity. Since real estate websites are typically commercial in nature, real estate professionals should make the most of social profiles and sharing, blog posting, and developing a persona as an authority in field. A few links from reputable sources hold the same value as hundreds of low quality, low relevance backlinks from an automated source. Furthermore, using automated or spammy techniques to gain back links is very likely to get a website manually or algorithmically penalized.

Using keyword anchor text links that are diversified such as domain name, branded, or generic with a low concentration of "money" keywords is a best practice post-Penguin. Here are some examples:

### BRANDED LINKS

[www.dynamicpagesolutions.com](http://www.dynamicpagesolutions.com)

Dynamic Page Solutions

### GENERIC LINKS

Website Examples

Check out our latest updates

### MONEY KEYWORDS

Real Estate IDX

Real Estate Website Provider

### BRANDED LINKS

[www.realestatecompanyx.com](http://www.realestatecompanyx.com)

Real Estate Company X

### GENERIC LINKS

Our Listings

Search now

### MONEY KEYWORDS

Scottsdale Homes for Sale

Scottsdale Real Estate





## Social Media 101

Many How-To videos for these resources are available on our website in the [“Training”](#) section.

This is not an all-inclusive list but rather a list that we feel is the most valuable for real estate professionals and can be easily implemented as part of an overall marketing plan.

Unlike any other marketing medium, social media has the ability to reach millions in seconds. In an increasingly competitive market, a real estate agent’s ability to reach the largest group of people in the shortest amount of time plays a lead role in generating sales dollars. The web has restructured the way people do business and prospecting using only traditional methods like print and direct mail can leave you behind the curve.

Understanding how social media impacts website rankings is a complex concept. Successful and active social media campaigns typically correlate with good webpage rankings. Understanding the causation is the complex part so we’d like to take a step back and suggest that social media is not exactly SEO, however it is a crucial part of an overall web marketing strategy. Social media engagement is directly linked with getting referring traffic to your site; more traffic increases the chances of gaining organic, inbound links. More traffic can also impact the time spent on your site which can have a positive impact on how well pages rank.



The list of social media sites is expansive and the tides of popularity turn depending on the whim of the masses. We’ll take a look at some of the biggest and most widely used platforms and some of the up and comers in 2013.

### GOOGLE PLUS

This is Google’s very own social networking platform. Creating a personal and business page is an absolute must as many of the perks associated with good placement such as Google Places and Google Authorship are directly related to participation. Including industry relevant and authoritative people and businesses in your circles can increase your own relevancy. Being included in industry relevant people’s and business circles can impact where your content shows up when a logged in user performs searches on Google for keywords.

### FACEBOOK

**Business Page** This is a staple in social media marketing. Understanding the difference between personal and business pages is the most important aspect as search engines are only able to include a very limited amount of personal profile information in the indices. Business page profiles can be viewed whether a user is logged in to Facebook or not. Marketing as a business has drawbacks currently because you cannot interact with other members of Facebook unless they have “liked” your business profile.

### TWITTER

Twitter is a great resource to use to drive traffic to social media posts, blog posts and web pages. It’s great to use for content inspiration, personal branding and relationship building. Currently, Google does not index Tweets, and is therefore not directly responsible for impacting SEO.



## PINTEREST

Pinterest has shown exponential growth since its inception. The Pinterest platform is heavily driven by image sharing. Pinterest can be used to help diversify the linking root domains of your backlinks if you publish pictures on a platform that can be repined by others. Pinterest's internal search engine offers a lot of opportunity if a marketer labels pictures broadly and thinks about what keywords or phrases may capture relevant searches for real estate. Tumblr A "microblogging" platform with the ability to function as a social sharing site. Use to build diversity in backlinks and increase branding and networking.

## BLOGGER

This is a free tool from Google and its very user-friendly and easy to set up. With plenty of flexibility and features such as template design, photo hosting and the ability to post pictures directly from your mobile phone, Blogger is an excellent resource to diversify your backlinks and grow your audience.

## YOUTUBE

With more than 800 million+ unique visitors and more than 4 billion hours of videos watched each month, YouTube has grown to be the 2nd most popular search engine on the web. Beating out competitors like Bing and Yahoo, this Google owned powerhouse is a unique social community that will only continue to grow. Once only seen as a place to post family videos, cat tricks, and pranks; YouTube is now an exceptional tool to use for promoting your individual products, projects, listings, and company. Using the latest up to date SEO techniques, you can make sure that your video will be seen across all of your various social platforms and as a bonus, your content will be easily indexed into Google's own search engine for an even broader audience.

## LINKEDIN

Primarily a B2B platform, LinkedIn is a great place to network with other professionals and grow your referral base. With more than 200 million users, it is the largest professional network online. Developing this profile in the most professional manner is a must for anyone in the industry as it's publicly viewable when buyers or sellers research your name or your business.

## INSTAGRAM

With more than 576 Facebook likes per second and more than 81 comments per second it's no wonder why Instagram is becoming one of the most

popular image sharing hubs on the Internet. Instagram uses aesthetically pleasing filters for pictures you take on your smartphone and organizes them by using the hash-tag symbol. When used in conjunction with a Real estate agents' Facebook and Twitter page, this social media platform can show potential client's communities, restaurants, and amenities that a real estate agent would like to highlight. This can be used as a marketing tool to feature anything from homes, to workplace environment. You can also use a metrics tool called, Statigram to help analyze your influence on the site. Besides showing potential clients gorgeous pictures of a listing, you can also let them get a glimpse into your everyday routine to help build relationships, engagement, and links back to your site.

## ACTIVERAIN

ActiveRain is a real estate niche-specific content management system (CMS) which requires a paid membership. CMSs enable users to generate rich blog content without knowing any programming languages or HTML. Users can post and easily format blog entries which are published and automatically shared among potential homebuyers, investors, sellers and fellow real estate professionals. This is a top notch platform for marketing and a must for anyone looking to support their site with quality, industry relevant backlinks.



### IT'S AS EASY AS ONE, TWO, THREE...

1. Pick the site you would like to start building your social media presence upon (keep your business demographics in mind.)
2. Set up a profile (Upload a picture. Write a paragraph summarizing/ highlighting your professional accomplishments.)
3. Publish (Be sure to read over the terms of use/guidelines before accepting.)

*You are on the path to a whole new, highly effective way of prospecting.*

### REALTY LIGHT POST

RealtyLightPost is a social network and blogging platform for real estate professionals. Using RealtyLightPost to post blog entries with backlinks to your site is a great way to develop link diversity from an industry relevant source. The site is powered by a WordPress back-end, which means first-time bloggers can easily create a free account and generate content for marketing.

### WORDPRESS

WordPress is the mack-daddy of blogging. More than 17% of all websites are powered by some form of WordPress, more than any other CMS. It is extremely user-friendly and allows users to easily change the look of their blog using themes and add functionality with plug-ins. Free blogs are available through WordPress.com, but the platform's true strength is unlocked by purchasing a hosting plan which features a WordPress service, or through custom installations for advanced users.

*Time to get proactive and start prospecting online!*

*Interesting Information = Interested Readers*



## Bonus Chapter: Why Internet Leads are Different

Internet leads need to be approached differently than the traditional real estate lead. The most important thing to remember is that homebuyers that are searching on the web (which is 90% of all homebuyers) have a different mentality than an individual that was personally referred to you from a colleague or former client. Simply stated, the faster you respond to an Internet lead, the greater your chances are for working with that customer.

When people are looking for a home to buy on the Internet, they are doing so because they want information NOW! If you receive an emailed lead, getting in touch with them within five minutes of the request significantly increases your chances of working with them; it also shows the client that you are at the top of your game. If the lead has provided a phone number, call them! A phone call is always more personable than an email response. If they do not answer leave them a message. If your competitor calls while you email and the client picks up the phone, guess what? You just lost that customer.



This is your first chance to impress them and let them know that they are important to you. It is a fact that homebuyer's that use the web most often select the first agent that shows a genuine interest in their needs.

*Will that be you?*



## Working Internet Leads



**M**ost homebuyer's will visit and submit requests for information on multiple sites, so the fastest Realtor wins. Our experience from generating a tremendous amount of Internet leads clearly shows that the quality of an Internet lead deteriorates rapidly after the first five minutes. Your lead can become cold within 30 minutes, waiting until the next day basically eliminates your chances of converting that customer. If you don't have the capability of being immediately notified of an incoming e-mail or phone call, you may be missing out on a flood of customers that now use the web to find their next home.

If you have an email or phone request for more information on a property you know nothing about, respond to the customer immediately anyways, and find out everything that they want to know about the property. Share with the customer that you have information on all of the properties listed on the web and ask if they have any other homes that they want information about. Tell them that you will look it up and get right back to them. That may stop them from making further inquiries with your competitors. You want to eliminate their need to contact other agents.

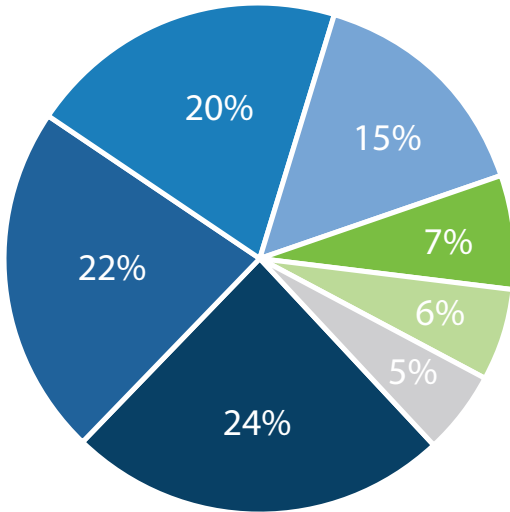
Ask what they are looking for in a home. Advise that you will set them up on an auto email search so that they will receive listings the day they hit the market with their search criteria. Get the customer pre-qualified with a lender. You will be prepared to show the customer homes they can afford, and you will be prepared to write a contract when the customer finds that right home.

If you are with a customer when you are "interrupted" with a lead, it only takes a few seconds to tell your lead that you will call them back with the information they want as soon as you finish with your current appointment.

Be prepared when you show a house or talk to a client, if they don't like one house, have a list of several other comparable homes to show them. Tell them you will modify their search after the showings so they will receive listings the day they hit the market with their modified search criteria. Also, today's rental client turns into next year's homebuyer. If a renter had a good experience with you as their Realtor, why wouldn't they call you when it's time to buy? Or refer you to their friends and family. Times are difficult for everyone, when conditions improve; you could have a large base of potential homebuyer's ready to contact you to help them find a home to purchase. The bottom line is this: **if you are currently not immediately responding to your Internet leads, you're missing out on 90% or more of the success you should be experiencing.**



# Search Engine Ranking Factors



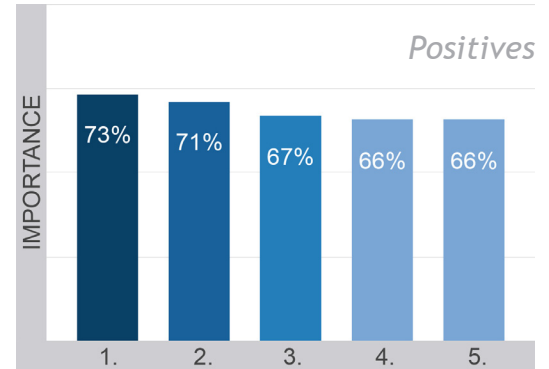
## OVERALL RANKING ALGORITHM

- 24% ..... Trust/Authority of the Host Domain
- 22% ..... Link Popularity of the Specific Page
- 20% ..... Anchor Text of External Links
- 15% ..... On-Page Keyword Usage
- 7% ..... Traffic and Click-Through Data
- 6% ..... Social Graph Metrics
- 5% ..... Registration and Hosting Data

\* The pie charts represent the percentages of respondents who gave that particular answer.

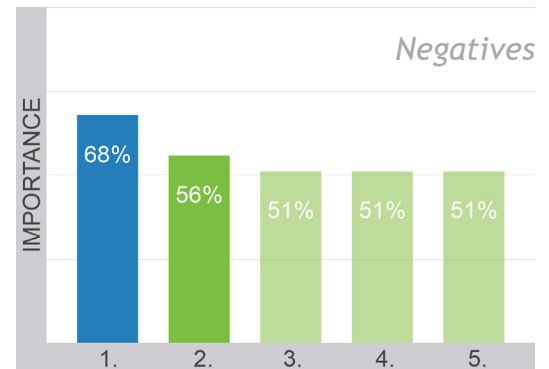
## TOP 5 POSITIVE RANKING FACTORS

1. Anchor Text from External Links
2. External Link Popularity (quantity/quality of external links)
3. Diversity of Link Sources (links from many unique root domains)
4. Keyword Use Anywhere in the Title Tag
5. Trustworthiness of the Domain Based on Link Distance from Trusted Domains (e.g. TrustRank, Domain mozTrust, etc.)



## TOP 5 NEGATIVE RANKING FACTORS

1. Cloaking with Malicious/Manipulative Intent
2. Link Acquisition from Known Link Brokers/Sellers
3. Links from the Page to Web Spam Sites/Pages
4. Cloaking by User Agent
5. Frequent Server Downtime & Site Inaccessibility



### Source:

SEOMoz 2009 survey of top SEO experts that was conducted on 100 search ranking factors along with specific questions about hot issues in the SEO field.



## Solutions & Resources

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### OUR SOLUTIONS

[Lead Performer](#) – Our combination of SEO and pay-per-click advertising and our most popular product

[Broker Package](#) – Brokerage web visibility that empowers the entire company

[Agent Package](#) – The most effective and affordable agent solution on the market with this muscle

[IDX Fusion](#) – WordPress sub domain solution for professionals that are hands-on but need power

[Facebook IDX](#) – Your audience can now search right on Facebook

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[Our Blog](#) – Keep relevant and up to date with search engine changes and marketing ideas

[Google+](#) - Get involved

[Facebook](#) – Build your audience

[Twitter](#) – Get Content Ideas @dynamicps

[How To Videos & Webinars](#) – Learn from the Pro's





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