

# Top of the heap

**B**uild it and they will come.” That’s true only in the movies. Building a Web site is merely a start; just as crucial is a strategy for driving traffic to it. That’s what makes search

engine optimization so critical.

SEO vendors enthusiastically promise their respective solutions will push your site to the top of the list. Popular approaches include software that evaluates your site’s HTML and content, then fine-tunes it for better placement; pay-per-click programs that charge for a good ranking in a sponsored link position; and turnkey services that optimize the site and generate external links to your site, something search engines like.

Because the rankings are so competitive and the search engines change their criteria continually, Web-savvy real estate professionals should use all the methods, says Mike Robinson, ABR®, broker-owner of Exit Realty Northwest ([www.exitnorthwest.com](http://www.exitnorthwest.com)) in Bentonville, Ark. The starting points for appealing to search engines: good content, keywords that appear in both your page content and HTML coding, and informative picture captions.

Robinson credits his site’s prominent search rankings to Web site provider Point2Agent.com. It costs him about \$99 per month and positions his site for

good placement on major search engines by focusing on keywords, content, and submission. He also uses a site linking consultant, which costs him about \$150 per month. “When we started with the link specialist, we had 65 incoming links to our site. At last count, we had more than 1,250.”

In Charlotte, N.C., Brett Furniss, ABR®, e-PRO®, of BDF Realty Inc. ([www.bdfreality.com](http://www.bdfreality.com)) handles optimization himself, but uses Submitnet.net to automatically submit his refreshed content to the search engines each month. The service’s basic package starts at \$19 for three months. “Search engines like to see dynamic pages,” he says. “So I make changes and move things around regularly.” He’s also developed pages of his site as minisites, such as for home rentals and homes for sale. For each page, he uses three to five keywords in the metatags, the page description, and the content—all of which attract search engines.

SEO is complicated. So ask yourself whether your time is best spent dabbling in this specialized and evolving field or selling real estate. **RM**

70%

Return on investment with search engine optimization—beating ROI for e-mail marketing, paid search, public relations, direct mail, and online advertising.

Marketing Sherpa’s Search Marketing Benchmark Guide, 2007

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