

An Evolving Web Presence

By Lovina Worick

Bob Moulton knows the value of relationships. If you do your loan with his company—you are indeed a customer-for-life. It's no wonder that he was ranked in *Mortgage Originator* Magazine as one of the top 100 LOs in the country for his 2005 individual dollar volume production. His actual production? \$123,000,000 from 324 closed loans.

Moulton started in the business 15 years ago from his basement. He now runs a successful mortgage company, Americana Mortgage, with 10 loan officers and four loan processors. Americana Mortgage is considered the largest jumbo broker in Long Island. Moulton's success, in part comes from a combination of experience, an understanding of marketing principles and his desire to use technology wherever he can to aid the mortgage process.

Before getting his Web site, his company was already successful. So why did he decide to get a site? "Things have a way of evolving," he says. "I'm always looking for better ways to do business. I thought a Web presence was one way to get more business."

According to Moulton, his reason behind getting a Web site was to use it to augment his existing marketing. He already had a successful business and operation. He never expected the Web site would change that business structure—but instead would be yet another avenue for getting business. Moulton's approach works. While a Web site can certainly increase your business, it is not a magic bullet that will suddenly generate leads out of thin air. Like any part of your business it requires a strategy and, as in Moulton's case, the better the strategy, the more powerful the results you can expect from your site.

The Site

Moulton feels strongly that a site should be up-to-date, accurate and offer relevant information. In order to accomplish this he has a person who helps him maintain the Web site—implementing daily rate updates while he does regular reviews of the site. Online for approximately eight years, he's gone through three different hosting companies and the site is in its fourth or fifth generation. "I feel it's important to constantly keep the site refreshing and informative," Moulton says.

His office has closed an average of 42 loans per month for the first six months. Moulton estimates a little over 20 percent of that business originated online. In Moulton's opinion the three most important areas on his site are his rates "which allow us to show we're competitive," his daily

market update "to keep our clients aware of market conditions" and a customer satisfaction survey. While many originators with Web sites understand the importance of showing rates, Moulton's idea to publish his customer satisfaction results is brilliant. It is very appealing to a customer, who doesn't know you from the next mortgage ad in a search engine, to see testimonials from other customers who give you the "thumbs up." As Moulton sees it—the credibility his Web site offers his company is significant.

Marketing

Moulton takes a holistic approach to his marketing efforts. He doesn't only do offline or online marketing — but combines the two at every opportunity, and he does all the basics. "Our Web site address is on everything," he says. This includes his voicemail greeting on weekends or when he's out of the office, as well as when asked for his e-mail address. "When people ask me for my e-mail," he says, "I'll always refer them to my Web site and tell them they'll find my e-mail address at the bottom of the home page along with other important information on mortgages."

While he sends potential clients to his site all the time, he also makes sure to let them know he'll follow up with a call. This technique is especially helpful at times when he's not in front of his computer. "If I'm talking to a customer from my car, I can tell them to go to my Web site for that information."

The majority of his business is from referrals. He has a database of approximately 5,000 past clients who receive quarterly newsletters from him, and he makes sure his newsletters reference his Web site address. Because his site information is always up-to-date, he feels it's a valuable tool to past clients who can check current rates and market conditions and get information on new loan products available.

Other forms of offline marketing are ads in regional Real Estate magazines and networking in community organizations such as the Rotary Club or his local Chamber of Commerce. Online, he does some search engine marketing, although he feels this avenue has not been as successful as others.


Moulton's overall marketing strategy is a successful balance between hi-tech and high-touch. This combination has proven to be the most successful when it comes to generating results from a Web site. When dealing with a potential new client, he does what's most important for the client — he offers

CONTINUED ON PAGE 122

them options. "I can take an application over the phone, I can mail it, fax it, e-mail it or you can apply online," he tells his customers. And the most common response? Most of his clients wish to receive the application via e-mail. This is a perfect example of hi-tech high-touch marketing.

Final Words

"A Web site is necessary today," says Moulton. "If you don't have one it can hurt you. It's the way of doing business in the new millennium. A Web site is expected. Everyone does their research online—for cell phones, cars, computers, mortgages...you name it."

To a company that doesn't yet have a Web site or who hasn't realized results from the site, Moulton recommends, "You really need to first define what the mission of the company is and then convey this along with your company's personality on your site. It shouldn't just be a plain bulletin-board listing of products you offer." Lastly, he advises keeping the site updated. "The Web site is good only if the information is accurate." 



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