

Scott Stroud: This is episode 101 of Selling More Homes, the Monday Morning Sales Meeting. This week, we feature an interview with Andy Brown of Move.com, and you're listening to the Selling More Homes Media Network.

Welcome to Selling More Homes, the Monday Morning Sales Meeting. For Jerry Rouleau, I'm Scott Stroud. Every week, we bring you interviews with sales and marketing professionals to help you find more buyers, close more sales, and earn more money in this challenging housing market, whether you're a realtor, builder, Sales and marketing manager, or new home specialist. This program has been designed just for you. Selling More Homes, the Monday morning sales meeting is a production of the Selling More Homes Media Network. So get ready to listen, take notes, and enjoy this week's program.

Jerry Rubo: Welcome to Selling More Homes Media Network. I'm Jerry Rubo.

Scott Stroud: I'm Scott Stroud.

Jerry Rubo: Hey, another great week coming up. I just returned from Tampa to give a keynote at a conference there, but Scott, you're heading out to Vegas.

Scott Stroud: I am. I'm heading back out for real estate blog world. It's a meeting of Podcasters and bloggers in the housing and real estate industry.

It's my first time attending that, and I'm looking forward to it.

Jerry Rubo: Well, hopefully, when you return, we'll have some new information to share with our listening audience—or at least send some emails.

Scott Stroud: No, I'm, I don't care about the information. I'm looking for the new goodies.

Jerry Rubo: new goodies, the new gadgets, huh?

Scott Stroud: new gadgets.

Jerry Rubo: Well, you know, last week, which is great, we're moving forward here with the end of the housing recession. October 8th was the designated date. So we're going uphill now.

Scott Stroud: At first, we got a little pushback on that, but overwhelmingly, the response has been positive, and people have jumped on. Yeah, we have declared the official end of the housing recession.

Jerry Rubo: Well, you know, I did a keynote on that date in Tampa, and I certainly mentioned it, and about a week before, I had gotten a note from a speaker, his name is John Martin, and he was doing a keynote in San Diego on the 8th. His topic was hope and vision value creation. And he was going to make sure he mentioned that that day was the end of the recession.

So you know, East Coast, Tampa, West Coast, San Diego, hopefully everybody in between caught on.

Scott Stroud: We can literally say that across the nation, this announcement and proclamation has been made.

Jerry Rubo: Great. Last week, we had a busy week. We had Tom Stefani's program on how to conduct home planning seminars there.

Scott Stroud: Good webinar. Very important webinar for right now.

Jerry Rubo: You know, and I've always said that one of the top things I would do when working with builders and realtors is to hold new home planning workshops and seminars in my market areas as a way of getting BVACs to come back and to chat with them in a non-threatening way.

Scott Stroud: That's the point. They are hungry for education, and if you present it as an educational program rather than a sales program, people are hungry. Yeah, they show up.

Jerry Rubo: Well, this week, we will talk to a new guest on the air. His name is Andy Brown.

You and I have met Andy over the past few years through the NAHB and the National Sales and Marketing Council. Yes, that's what he's actively involved in. But Andy is also involved with Move.com. He's going to talk to us today about some different things we can do regarding the Internet, linking, and getting our name up there.

Scott Stroud: Before we get them on the line here, Jerry, you mentioned this company, move.com, and I'd like to recognize them for a lot of the work that they've done for the sales and marketing council, sponsoring and funding several of the reports and studies that have been done.

Thanks to move.com. We appreciate your efforts. Efforts and,

Jerry Rubo: I think they're really promoting this week's interview. Also, with Andy, so hopefully, we have some new listeners on the air who are familiar with Move.com.

Scott Stroud: Very good.

Jerry Rubo: Well, let's get Andy on the air here.

Scott Stroud: Andy, welcome to our program today.

Andy Brown: Thank you, Scott, so much for having me.

Scott Stroud: Andy, as we mentioned in the introduction, you're a vice president with Move.com and Realtor.com. Tell us a little about those companies and what you do, and that'll set up the interview for us today.

Andy Brown: Yeah, thanks, Scott. Yeah, move.com. We actually have a sister site, realtor.com. We are an Internet listing service, also known as a portal for consumers. They come to move.com and realtor.com to find retail-type properties on the realtor.com side and real estate agents and brokers. On the Move.com site, they come to find new home properties and rental properties.

So, we list all builders, individual broker agents, apartment leasing companies, homes, properties, and communities online.

Scott Stroud: So everything you do is online, and these are what we call portals, correct?

Andy Brown: Correct. Everything we do is online, and this would be called a portal.

Scott Stroud: Let's, let's pursue that.

Why should realtors and builders use the Internet and portals to market their homes?

Andy Brown: Well, you know, that's a great question, Scott. What I'd really like to do, and it makes a lot of sense to really have your listeners understand a little bit more about the Internet as a whole, and then we can certainly talk about portals, is if I could just.

I asked what an important question about the Internet is. Today we're in a notion of acronyms and information about internet marketing. And I'm curious if your listeners are overwhelmed. People I talk with can sometimes become overwhelmed. And what we need to look at as far as the Internet as a whole is that there are really multiple layers within the Internet marketing opportunity.

I like to look at this at different levels. We have three levels, and I'll focus on three: levels one, two, and three. Level one would be where builders have really committed to using new media in their marketing mix. They stick with the basics. I mean, this is where they would use their website.

They built a website and are very into updating it. A builder would potentially have listings on their MLSs or portal sites like Move.com or Realtor.com, and they are more or less enhancing those listings to have a better consumer experience on a portal site.

Enhancing listings is crucial to a consumer's activity on different portal sites. If the builder gets more comfortable with the foundation, they will become a level two Internet user. This would include things like search engine optimization and search engine marketing, expanding further into the internet experience.

The third level is really venturing into something that we're all familiar with and have heard a lot of lately: the social media aspect, which includes blogging, Facebook, Twitter, and many different sources. At level three, the goal for a builder would be to have their company website at the center of all of their marketing.

That would be the highest level of online marketing opportunity. And we're really, the verdict is still out somewhat with the social media side. It's a very valid way of doing things, but we're all trying to determine the return on investment.

But level three would be kind of the highest level that a builder would get to. But I mean, you know, let's face it today, Scott. We're in a challenging time right now. The budgets have been shrunk. You know, we're doing more with less. We have multiple levels of accountability, and certainly, performance is paramount.

But one of the things that I like to share with people is that performance is paramount. With our limited budgets, now is a perfect time to ensure that we're placing our media in the right place and certainly focusing on areas that we know can generate a great return on investment for the upcoming turn of our market.

Now is the perfect time to start planning for the future so we can reap the rewards as opportunities arise. Another critical point about Internet marketing and portals is that they can be highly effective, cost-effective, and totally accountable for performance.

And that's where you really want to get to, certainly in our challenging times, where we have to have extra accountability right now, and certainly the Internet can provide that. Some additional keys are that you need to plan and execute your internet strategy well. Another benefit of online or internet marketing is that you can measure results and change course very quickly with this medium, which you need to be very aware of.

I use the analogy of lawyers practicing law and medical doctors practicing medicine. We need to be in the business of Internet marketing. It is an ongoing, dynamic process that we need to constantly develop, looking for new ways to generate returns on investments and ultimately selling new homes, retail homes, and all sorts of other things.

There are many opportunities with internet marketing. But I think, you know, it all kind of, Scott, comes back to a question that I think is sometimes isn't asked or sometimes overlooked: With your listeners, builders and realtors and other folks, I mean, you've got to ask yourself, you know, do you believe in new media? And it is going to be an essential part of your success. That is really the number one thing you have to ask yourself. Are you committed to this medium? And do you believe in it? If the answer is yes, another few questions are: Do you have the capability in-house, in your own company, to manage this dynamic process?

Do you need to outsource some of this, or is it a combination of both? In my experience, it's usually a combination of both. Many companies are very good at managing their websites and

updating their content. However, they may need some help outsourcing their search engine optimization opportunities.

Or do you really understand How to buy media through search engine marketing? And that's where companies like portal companies and Internet listening services can help your listeners understand the process. So, to sum all this up, I mean, I think if you really look at the opportunity of, you know, why use the Internet, and how can internet portals, you know, really help you, If you look at the three different levels level one, you know, very much so being your own website, making sure it's up to date things are changing constantly with your own website. Also, look at opportunities for companies like portals or internet listing services to list your communities, individual plans for models, and custom plans. When you have multiple listing services in your local markets, you must ensure those listings are enhanced when they go to a site like realtor.com. We know from statistical data that consumers like to see multiple photos as an example, which would be an example of enhancing at level one. You can get into email marketing, and some display advertising on portals at the level one level. Those are great avenues to brand your company and your community and drive overall exposure, traffic, and leads to your website.

Then, at level two, you're more robust in your site efforts. Then, you get into more of an SEO strategy. And some additional search engine marketing, sometimes called SEM marketing, as budgets permit. And depending on what size your budget is, there are always opportunities. As I mentioned, our third level is where your website is the hub of all your marketing efforts. Even offline marketing efforts should get right into your website. This is a very trackable media. But that's where you get into more of your social media opportunities, blogging, Twitter, and Facebook, which would drive some additional traffic exposure opportunities.

I recommend breaking this down into levels. Move.com and realtor.com have people nationwide who we would be happy to talk with and consult with you free of charge about some of the marketing and, specifically, the internet listing portal side of the business.

Those are some of the recommendations, Scott, that I would give to your listeners.

Scott Stroud: You bring up some excellent points about online whatever we're doing online. We have an opportunity to measure. Quickly and make adjustments to those. That's important.

That's difficult to do with offline marketing.

However, through the portals, most of our listeners are already online from our conversations with them. Most of them have a website. They may even do social marketing, blogging, and posting on Facebook, LinkedIn, and ActiveRain. But They need to figure out why. You know, you asked a question earlier.

You said if you're committed to this, here's what you should do. Or if you believe in it. Well, there are still a lot of skeptics within our industry as to what this social part of it does. And what if

you're not sure? What actions do you take? How would what would you recommend to someone that if they needed clarification on social, they didn't know about it, how would they prove it to themselves?

Or what course of action would you recommend?

Andy Brown: Yeah, that's a great question, and I mean, I would even expand that really to anything related to interactive marketing. I would research the topic through a lot of data. You can go on to Google and research simply by typing in the keyword, you know, social media, and there's just a ton of information on that topic, but that's part of the whole, you know, in-house.

There are many companies in the market now that are doing social well, specifically in real estate. I would probably reach out to them to get a better understanding of how to effectively use the social media side of the business.

Scott Stroud: Mm-hmm. Dude, I know that Facebook and Twitter certainly drive a lot of traffic to our website.

And if anybody's not a believer yet, they need to try it and commit a little bit of time and money to have somebody start a blog and start using those things. But about portals, Mm-Hmm. This may be something that people are even less familiar with than the social aspect of Internet marketing.

How is it that someone could use, let's say, move.com, a builder could use move.com to enhance their listings?

Andy Brown: Yeah, portals and internet listing services have been around for quite some time, and we find that they're a good entry point if you're interested in doing More internet marketing. Usually, the fees vary from subscription-based to pay-for-performance. One of the benefits of Internet listing sites is that you can really enhance all of your communities. You get a couple of large benefits from community exposure through your plans, specs, and models, and you can put multiple photos, multiple links, videos, and virtual tours, so you get a wide range of exposure right there on these Internet listing portals.

That's one of the major benefits compared to the social side of what we were talking about, which is more conversational in nature. You'll find that many consumers will go to the portal site.

Jerry Rubo: to

Andy Brown: research their new home and retail purchases because of all the available content.

Scott Stroud: Okay. All right, so there's a lot more that can be done there, and I was just interested in what you meant by enhancing. Do you mean that you can add more information, videos, photographs, and descriptions to more than, say, an MLS would?

Andy Brown: Yeah, exactly, Scott. Enhancing a listing typically, most of the internet portals, Internet listing portals will have a basic level, and then you can enhance those with multiple photos and links and those sorts of things.

Scott Stroud: In your experience, Andy, the housing industry marketers tell us that buyers begin their searches online at an extraordinary ratio. The last I heard, it was over 90%. Searches begin online. Is that what you're saying also?

Andy Brown: Yeah. That, that, that number continually could grow.

It seems like year over year, and we're getting it, you know, almost a hundred percent now. So, I absolutely concur with that. We are seeing that.

Scott Stroud: Okay. That means that everything else, including everything you do online, becomes much more important. That may be why the social media aspect of it is the portals. Everything should point back to the website, and I'm glad you made that point earlier. And speaking of that, when you're working with a portal, in addition to the benefits that you listed earlier, when you're there, don't those links point back to your website? And are those links important to the relevancy of a website?

Andy Brown: Yeah, they're crucially important, Scott. And to answer your question specifically, yes, absolutely. They would direct most of the internet listing. Services will have their links directly back to the builder, and that's a benefit because you can leverage all of the partners that, for example, move.com or realtor.com has outside of just their organic searches that they get that consumers know the brand. We have some partnerships that drive additional traffic for a builder by linking. On there, and again, that's that enhancement side. Connecting on a portal like Move.com would drive them additional traffic. That's one of the benefits of a portal.

Scott Stroud: And search engines look at the number of inbound links you have from authoritative sites to grant authority to your site, don't they?

Andy Brown: Yeah, you're absolutely right. That's just another way of, you know, being indexed and ranked.

Scott Stroud: Yeah, so having your homes listed on different sites, such as the ones that you've mentioned, such as your sites. That helps pull your website up in the search engine rankings.

Andy Brown: Yeah, I think it absolutely can help.

Scott Stroud: You've shared a lot of information with us, and again, many of our listeners may not have been aware of the portals, you know, such as Move.com and realtor.com, and their benefits. So we appreciate you sharing that with us and how the Internet is working to drive

traffic into the model homes in general. Once again, Andy, tell us how folks can contact you if they wish to explore move.com or realtor.com a little more.

Andy Brown: Yeah, thanks, Scott. I appreciate it. Yeah, certainly. If anybody's interested, you can contact us at 8 8 8 3 4 7 2 2 1 1 or email us at New Home marketing@move.com. We'd love to give you a free consultation and hear from you.

Scott Stroud: Once again, we've been speaking with Andy Brown at move.com and realtor.com. Andy, thank you so much for being our guest this week.

Jerry Rubo: Well, Scott, you know, we've got a few different levels here to think about things that we, as builders or realtors, can be doing to continue that exposure.

Scott Stroud: You know, move.com and Andy talked about the fact that everything is moving online. Search engine optimization is certainly one level, but it needs to go far. He mentioned that designing your online marketing strategy is critical to finding and engaging the market today.

Jerry Rubo: You know, and you've heard me say this at meetings, Scott, but you know, target marketing today is easier, quicker, and less expensive than it was five or ten years ago.

Scott Stroud: Yes. But it still takes a strategy, thought, and a plan to work. You can't just get on the

Jerry Rubo: outline here the different things everyone could do to simplify that target marketing.

Scott Stroud: Yes, yeah. Everybody can do it, but you still need to do it correctly. Okay?

Jerry Rubo: Well, great. So this is great here. And you're going to be up in Vegas this week, and next week, we're going to have Ed Doss, who will be on the air with us. So I'm looking forward to doing that interview next week.

Scott Stroud: Good. Do you know what his topic will be?

Jerry Rubo: Well, it's going to be a combination thing. It will be a surprise here for our listening audience. We're going to do two things in that interview. It's going to be on the same lines here moving forward with what our interview was this week, getting your houses and your homes listed on various portal sites, and so forth.

Scott Stroud: Okay, we've got a surprise next week. That'll be interesting. I'm looking forward to that.

Jerry Rubo: I'll hopefully fill you in before the call.

Scott Stroud: Why start now?

Jerry Rubo: Right, right. Well, until next week, I'm Jerry Rubel.

Scott Stroud: I'm Scott Stroud.

Jerry Rubo: Thanks for listening to the Selling More Homes Media Network.