



The IDXdirect
Website & Pro Package
User's Guide

Winter 2004

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Introduction

Congratulations on purchasing the premiere IDX product on the market. With your new IDXdirect Pro Package you can now offer your online prospects searchable and savable MLS listings, daily new listing advisories by email and a host of other features specifically designed to encourage anonymous web shoppers to trade the information with you that you need to develop relationships.

Importantly, farming on the Internet requires a different approach than that required to develop relationships with your traditional referral-based clientele. Specifically, web shoppers seek to research alternatives *before* committing to a real estate professional.

The good news is that with the IDXdirect Pro Package you capture these shoppers on your site and keep them there as they evolve from research mode to transaction mode. The better news is that you do this with little effort on your part and the end result is worth waiting for – these shoppers as a group

have more disposable income, close their transactions faster due to their advance research, and recognize the benefits of using a real estate professional for a smooth, efficient transaction close. The trick is to capture these prospects in the early research phase and offer them enticements to stick with you as they move closer to their transaction phase. The IDXdirect Pro Package has been carefully and specifically designed to help you accomplish this objective.

A quick note about the data underlying your IDXdirect Pro Package is in order at the outset. Your IDXdirect Pro Package is almost entirely driven by the IDX data stream provided by your MLS. Occasionally you will notice that photos or listings are missing from your IDXdirect Pro Package. We pass through the data exactly as it is provided by your MLS. For missing or incorrect data, please check with your MLS's technical support department before contacting us. It often turns out that missing listings were inadvertently provided to the MLS by the listing office without authorization for Internet display. Without this authorization, the listings will be omitted from the IDX database and we cannot pass them through to your IDXdirect Pro Package. We update our databases, including photos, every 24 hours, generally in the early, early morning hours. Within 24 hours of correcting the data provided to the MLS, you will see the listings in your package.

It is also important for you to note that your MLS's IDX database is generally not 100% coextensive with its MLS database. Pursuant to NAR Guidelines, most MLSs allow brokers to "opt out" of the IDX program. When a broker opts his or her office's listings out of the IDX database, neither that broker nor that broker's agents are allowed to display IDX data on their websites.

Most IDX databases are, however, extensive. Even where they do not contain 100% of the MLS's active listings, they invariably contain enough listings to interest your prospects and induce them to save listings in your IDXdirect Pro Package, thereby "starting" a relationship with you. Please consult your local MLS to inquire about the broker opt out rates in your area. If it makes sense for you, we make banners available for your search page inviting prospects to phone or email you to learn about additional listings.

One last note about this User's Guide. It is written to be used by both clients who purchase the IDXdirect Pro Package as a stand alone product to be integrated with existing websites, as well as clients who purchase our IDX-powered websites. Certain of the features described herein are available only with our websites. Please look for the legend WEBSITES ONLY to identify these particular features.

For information not covered in this User's Guide, please email support@idxdirect.com. To provide feedback on the usefulness of the information provided in this User's Guide, please email feedback@idxdirect.com.

Enjoy your IDXdirect Pro Package!

Chapter 1

Getting Started

Registering New Domain Names

We recommend registering several domain names which support your branding strategy. We recommend that you register your personal name, any domain name that describes your expertise and any domain name which would be easy for your clients and prospects to remember. Examples would be www.gwenwhite.com, www.belair-properties.com and www.palatialproperties.com. All domain names can be pointed to a single site and you might choose to use the different domain names in differing marketing contexts. Contact us at support@idxdirect.com to register additional names. Please note that we can only point names to your site

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if those names are hosted on our server. If you choose to host your additional names on another server, you must contact that host to provide pointing instructions.

Transferring Existing Domain Names

If you have an existing domain name to which you want us to add a website or you have other existing domain names you would like us to host, you must contact your domain name registrar and instruct the registrar to point your name(s) to our server. The addresses to which your names should be pointed are:

NS1.IDXDIRECT.COM

NS2.IDXDIRECT.COM

Alternatively, you can email support@idxdirect.com with the username and password for your domain name(s) and we can effect the repointing changes as your consultant.

Placing Your Pro Package Link

If you have ordered the IDXdirect Pro Package as a stand alone application, to be integrated with your existing website, you will be delivered a link to attach to your website.

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Think of your Pro Package as a website within your website. This mechanism is required because we must host your Pro Package on our server where the data is hosted. The cost to you to have the data on your server would be considerable and not generally allowed by MLS rules. Only the most sophisticated website visitors will notice that they have moved to another server when using your Pro Package. The Package will operate within your branding and with your website in the background, and most visitors will not notice the server switch.

When your link is delivered by our Order Team, you have the choice of asking your webmaster to place the link or having us place it. You will be prompted to make your choice with your link delivery instructions. If you want us to place the link, you will need to provide the username and password for your website to support@idxdirect.com.

If you ask your webmaster to place the link, we recommend attaching it to a button on your homepage which is prominently displayed and which reads "Search The MLS." If your prospects cannot find your package, your odds of capturing their interest and contact information are greatly diminished. Please be aware that certain web-masters, either through carelessness or a motivation to sell you their own

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inferior IDX product, may bury the link to the IDXdirect Pro Package in an inconspicuous place where your website visitors are unlikely to find it. For advice on maximizing placement of your Pro Package link, please email support@idxdirect.com or contact your IDXdirect Online Marketing Consultant.

Getting Word Out About Your IDX-Powered Website

Once your IDXdirect Pro Package link is attached to your website and an enticing button is prominently displayed on your homepage, you are ready to start driving traffic to your website and using your IDXdirect Pro Package to capture hot leads.

There are several cost-effective ways of driving traffic to your new, improved website:

1. Emphasize your web address on all your print materials

Emphasize your web address on all your print materials, including your “For Sale” signage, your print advertisements, your email signature and your stationery. Every place you use a phone number, you should include your web address. Where you can only include one or the other,

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consider the context, but sometimes a web address is preferable to your intended audience.

2. Reference your web address in your voicemail messages

Reference your web address in your voicemail message(s). Consider also mentioning that property listings can be searched on your website. Many people call for information and if they cannot reach you, they are just as happy to learn that they can access the information they want in another easy manner.

3. Register your website with search engines

Register your website with search engines. A predominance of consumers start their transaction research in the search engines. Google, one of the “biggies,” projects that it will launch **half a billion** real estate-related search results in 2004. Registering your site in Google, as well as the other search engines, greatly enhances your chances of attracting traffic to your website. Please contact your IDXdirect Online Marketing Specialist to learn more about IDXdirect’s Search Engine Registration Package, a package that offers registration in hundreds of search engines and one full year of placement monitoring and advice on position improvement.

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4. Exchange banner ads with your natural power partners

Exchange banner ads with your natural power partners – lenders, title companies, relocation specialists, etc. Ask your Online Marketing Specialist for more information about adding banners to your website.

5. Broadcast an electronic newsletter to all of your contacts

Broadcast an electronic newsletter to all of your contacts with useful information and a live link to your website.

Once you have traffic flowing to your website, you are ready to capture hot leads with your IDXdirect Pro Package.

Logging In And Using Your Administrative Tools

At the bottom of every page in your IDXdirect website and/or IDXdirect Pro Package, you will find a link called “Agent Login.” This is where you log in to manage your website and/or IDXdirect Pro Package. Should you forget your password, use the “Forgot Your Password” feature on the login page. Your username is required to use this feature. If you have forgotten both your username and password, email support@idxdirect.com.

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Once you log in, you will see a navigation bar on the left and two options center screen to manage your Saved Properties email notification and copies of the new listing advisories sent to your registered clients.

If the Saved Properties email notification is turned on, you will receive an email each time a prospect or registered client saves a search on your website. This feature allows you to check their private page on your website to gauge whether the new searches demonstrate a move closer to initiating a transaction. Some agents prefer not to receive these emails or to turn them off during extended absences from the office.

If the New Listing Advisories email copy is turned on, you will receive copies of all advisories emailed to your registered clients advising of new listings meeting their search criteria. Depending on the number of registered clients you have, and the new listing activity in your MLS, these email copies can be voluminous. On the other hand, it is highly beneficial to know what hot new listings your prospects are receiving under your name.

For information about maximizing use of the remainder of your administrative tools, please consult the pertinent, subsequent chapter.

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Chapter 2

Creating And Maintaining Your Agent Profile

Your Agent Profile is that part of the navigation bar in your administrative tools where you manage the information on your IDXdirect website related to you and the information (other than listings information which is covered in a subsequent chapter) that you provide to the public. Please note that if you are running an IDXdirect Pro Package only, you can edit a brief version of your profile (primarily your contact information) and change your password, but nothing more.

Editing Your Displayed Profile

If you are using the IDXdirect website, you will notice a

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button on your homepage that says “About [you]” (the “About You Page”). The content for this page is easily edited in your administrative tools by clicking on “Edit Profile” under “Agent Profile” on your navigation bar.

When you click “Edit Profile,” an easy to use form appears. Simply type in as much of the information as you choose. If you leave a box blank, that category of information will not appear on your About You Page. For example, opting not to include a mobile number results in that field not appearing on the About You Page. To illustrate this concept, type an “x” in the mobile number box on your Edit Profile page and save your changes. You will see on the About You Page of your website the text reading “Mobile Number: x.” Remove the “x” from your Edit Profile page, save your changes, go to your About You Page and you will see that the entire field has disappeared.

Changing Your Password

Your IDXdirect website or IDXdirect Pro Package link will be delivered with a generic password. We encourage our clients to immediately change this password by clicking on “Change Password” and following the prompts.

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Selecting Cities To Be Displayed On Your Search Page

If you cater to a particular geographic region of your MLS, you may want to consider limiting the cities which your website visitors can choose to search. Of course, you may want to offer searches for the entire area and refer your leads to other agents once you have cemented your relationship with your prospect.

If you choose to limit the searchable cities in your package, click on “Select Cities” under “Agent Profile” and de-select the cities you want omitted from your list. Please note that certain versions of our IDXdirect Pro Package do not allow the agent to perform this function. If you do not see a “Select Cities” link under “Agent Profile,” please email support@idxdirect.com and our Technical Team will reprogram the city list for you. Please review the cities on your search page and specify the cities you want omitted.

Chapter 3

Creating And Maintaining Your Website Settings

The information in this chapter is designed to help you manage the systems supporting your IDXdirect website. This information is not applicable to stand alone IDXdirect Pro Packages.

Setting Up Your Email Account(s)

Each domain name registered with IDXdirect comes with up to six email accounts branded to that domain name. Email accounts are commonly set up for you, a general information account, your assistant and/or other administrative functions where it makes sense to segregate communications.

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We know of sellers' agents who use sold@yourdomain.com. Email is used all the time and is starting to outpace the phone as the communications tool of choice. Every time you use a branded email account, you are reinforcing your own marketing brand and setting yourself apart as a savvy marketer, one that any buyer or seller would want on their team. No matter how clever your AOL screenname is, you are reinforcing AOL's brand every time you send an email, not yours.

Multiple email accounts can be pointed to one primary account. You may find it advantageous to set up, for example, yourname@yourdomain.com, info@ yourdomain.com, sellers@yourdomain.com, buyers@ yourdomain.com and exclusiveclients@yourdomain.com. All five accounts can be "pointed" at yourname@ yourdomain.com. Of course, if you select this strategy, all replies come from yourname@yourdomain.com. This might be perfectly acceptable in your circumstances.

If you are a little more technologically-inclined, you can maintain all five accounts separately in your desktop email software under separate personalities – that is, all messages come into one account because all accounts point there, but you can reply with different personalities. Our Technical Team

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can help you set up your accounts in the manner that will work best with your style. Please email support@idxdirect.com after your website is delivered to set up a consultation.

IDXdirect also offers webmail services. Webmail allows you to check your email any place you can log on to the Internet. Logging on to AOL's website to check your AOL mail, as opposed to using AOL software, is one example of webmail. Please email support@idxdirect.com or contact your Online Marketing Consultant for more information about IDXdirect's webmail services.

Managing Multiple Domain Names

Much like email, you can register multiple domain names and "point" them to one website. In fact, we recommend this strategy to our clients and encourage them to think globally about their different marketing contexts. In some contexts, it might make sense to market with www.yourname.com, while in others, it might be more powerful to market your niche, such as www.lidoisleproperties.com for an exclusive area in Newport Beach called Lido Isle. To have that particular domain name lends its owner an extra dose of credibility and cachet. How valuable is the marketing impact every time somebody sees sold@lidoisleproperties.com?

Creating And Maintaining Your Website Settings

Yet another strategy is to choose a domain name that is easy for your prospects and clients to remember, such as www.bestrealtor.com. Like “boutique” phone numbers, you want prospects to remember your web address from the time they see it until the time they sit down at their computer to find it.

We also recommend registering domain names that are common misspellings of your actual domain name. For example, Terri Smith might register both www.terrismith.com and www.terrysmith.com. Of course she is not going to market with the misspelled domain name, but she *is* going to point it to her actual site and capture people who misspelled her first name. Another variation of this strategy is to lock up .com, as well as .net to catch a common typing mistake, as well as to prevent somebody else from marketing a name virtually identical to yours. Please contact your Online Marketing Consultant to register additional domain names.

Changing Your Website Design

Changing up your website from time to time keeps it fresh and interesting to your prospects. Even a simple color change is often enough to provide a dramatic difference. Contact our Technical Team with ideas for change and they

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will provide a quote. Often only a nominal charge is indicated.

Optimizing Your Website For Search Engines

All IDXdirect websites come optimized for search engines. We specialize in the real estate industry and closely watch all relevant search engine trends.

Having an optimized website, however, is no guarantee that the search engines will find you. Optimized simply means that you are ready when they get to you. With an optimized site, your odds of gaining a favorable ranking are greatly enhanced.

Search engines can be “encouraged” to find your site more quickly through the paid registration process. This process can be time-consuming, expensive and tricky. Search engines do not disclose the details of their ranking criteria. Your best bet is to hire an expert to help you navigate these tricky waters.

Once you are registered, you need to evaluate the ranking arbitrarily assigned to your site and study strategies for improving your ranking, if indicated. And your work still is not done! You also need to vigilantly monitor your ranking.

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Please contact your Online Marketing Consultant for more information about IDXdirect's search engine registration services.

Chapter 4

Creating And Updating Your Website Content

If you have an IDXdirect website, you can edit your content by observing the few simple guidelines discussed below. The IDXdirect Technical Team is also available to edit content for you.

Editing Your Website Content

If you are using an IDXdirect website and wish to edit your website content, click on “Website Content” under “Agent Profile” in your administrative tools. Behind this link is a table listing your editable pages and providing a further link to edit each such page. Clicking any of these edit links will take you

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to a window displaying the HTML programming for the current content.

If you are proficient with HTML programming, you can make your edits within the existing commands. If you are less comfortable with HTML programming, you may prefer creating your content in a user-friendly HTML editor such as Microsoft FrontPage, and then pasting that content into your edit window for your website. If neither of the foregoing options appeals to you, your third option is to email a Word document to support@idxdirect.com, and our Technical Team will change your content for you.

Adding Additional Pages To Your Website

To add additional pages to your website, please contact support@idxdirect.com. Templated websites include up to 12 pages of editable content. Additional pages are subject to modest upcharges. Please inquire about pricing prior to placing you order. Your additional pages will require HTML programming for content. Consult with our Technical Team at support@idxdirect.com to assess whether you need additional buttons or links to navigate your additional pages and the most optimal placement of these buttons or links.

Creating And Maintaining Your Website Content

Adding Useful Links To Your Website

To position yourself with your prospects as a provider of resources, consider adding a “Useful Links” page to your IDXdirect website with hyperlinks to other web-based resources. These links might include school information, local chamber of commerce information or other similar information. Our Technical Team can help you add these links.

Featuring Recommended Vendors On Your Website

Whether to portray yourself as a resource provider or because you’ve struck deals with vendors to mutually promote websites, we can help you set up a page of recommended vendors on your IDXdirect website. Please contact support@idxdirect.com for pricing and samples.

Customizing Your MLS/IDX Search Capability

You will be delivered a basic, default IDXdirect Pro Package either with your IDXdirect website or as your stand alone application to be integrated with your existing website. Since first offering the IDXdirect Pro Package for sale, our clients have asked us to develop a variety of bells and whistles to enhance the attractiveness and usability. We listened

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carefully and now offer a variety of customizations for nominal charges. Common customizations include creating special filters designed to return a particular categories of results, such as a link that says “Search Horse Properties” or “Search Estates” and returns only the designated results when clicked by your website visitor. Clients with IDXdirect Pro Packages also often ask for help in enhancing the look and feel of the package to better integrate with the look and feel of their non-IDXdirect website, such as adding their photo or website navigation bar to the page. Dozens of other customizations are also available.

Seen a nice trick on another agent's website? Email samples to our Technical Team at support@idxdirect.com, and odds are that we can create it for you.

Please contact support@idxdirect.com for pricing and samples of presently available customizations.

Chapter 5

Managing Your Listings

The “Listings Management” functionalities offered with your IDXdirect Website or IDXdirect Pro Package are designed to help you highlight and promote your personal listings and/or those of your company on the MLS search page of your website or Pro Package. This is the page where your website visitors will search listings and the perfect place to highlight the properties with which you have a special relationship.

Featured Homes Manager

When you have active listings, they will automatically be pulled from the data stream and featured in a box prominently placed on your search page, titled “Featured Homes.” If you

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have multiple active listings, your listings will cycle through the box each time the page is re-visited or otherwise refreshed. If you personally have no active listings, the listings belonging to your company will cycle through the window. Where there are multiple listings for either you or your company if you have no listings, visitors will also see a link titled “View All.” Clicking on this link will display thumbnail sketches of all listings, 12 at a time, sorted by descending pricing. If you have no active listings and your company has no active listings, the “Featured Homes” window disappears from your search page until such time as an active listing belonging to you or your company is detected by your package from the IDX data stream.

Sold Listings Manager

Sold listings are not part of the IDX database and must, therefore, be added to your IDXdirect website or IDXdirect Pro Package semi-manually. We call this “semi-manually” because you must take a couple of affirmative steps, but part of the process is still done for you. After taking these simple steps, a window appears on your search page titled “Just Sold.” This window is strategically placed on your search page to demonstrate your recent successes in getting transactions completed – a good thing from the perspective of both buyers and sellers. Everybody wants to work with an

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experienced agent who gets things done.

The box that appears on your search page will display a brief description of the property with a link to the detail page. A link to “View All” takes your visitor to thumbnail descriptions of all listings entered by you as “Just Sold.”

The first time you open the Just Sold Manager, a table will appear asking you to enter the listing’s MLS number and comments about the property. These comments will appear on the View All page. Clicking the “Show As Just Sold” box will cause the property to be displayed in the “Just Sold” box on your search page. If you have no properties marked as “Just Sold,” no box will appear on your search page, even if you have information entered in the Just Sold Manager.

The next time you open the Just Sold Manager after adding one or more properties, a second table can be viewed which displays all of your previously entered “Just Sold” properties. In this table you can modify or delete these listings. In the second table below, which you will recognize from your first visit, you can add new or additional Just Sold listings.

Open House Manager

Managing Your Listings

Featuring open houses on your website is a great way to get prospects to check back with your site, knowing that you keep your content fresh and interesting.

To feature open house information on the search page of your IDXdirect website or IDXdirect Pro Package, click on the “Open House” link under “Listings Management” in your administrative tools. Enter the MLS number of the property to be held open and a table will appear, prompting you to enter the pertinent information. Click “update” and the listing will be featured as an Open House on your search page. A drop down menu listing all active Open Houses in your package allows you to select an Open House listing to modify or delete. Please note that Open Houses entered with a date certain will disappear from your Open House Manager when the date passes to help prevent you from displaying outdated information on your website.

Once you click “Update” for your new information in the Open House Manager, your website visitors will see a box on your search page titled “Open Houses.” As with your “Featured Homes” box and “Just Sold” box, the Open House box is strategically placed to catch the attention of website visitors searching for listings and draw them to your particular listings. Also like the “Featured Homes” box, multiple Open

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House descriptions/photos will cycle through the window. Visitors can click the Open House photo or “View All” to be taken to your thumbnail descriptions page and the commentary you chose to add in your Open House Manager. Your visitors can click the address for detailed information on the property pulled from the IDX data stream. They can also click links to map the property and get driving directions or to request more information directly from you by email.

As mentioned above, entering a specific date in your Open House Manager will cause the open house information to disappear from your site when the date passes. If you plan to hold a property open for several successive weeks, you can either re-enter the information each time the designated date passes, or you can choose not to enter a specific date. In the time field you can type in simply the time or a comment similar to “Every Sunday from 1-4 pm.” Take care to remove the listing from your Open House Manager when you discontinue the showings.

If you wish to delete a listing from your Open House Manager, simply “select” the listing from the drop down menu marked “Active Open Houses” and choose “Erase.” The listing will disappear from your Open House Manager and from your Open House window on your IDXdirect website or

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IDXdirect Pro Package. If this is your only active open house listing, the Open House window on your IDXdirect website or IDXdirect Pro Package will disappear until you add new listings.

Virtual Tours Manager

Please contact our Technical Team to activate this functionality for your IDXdirect website. We apologize, but IDXdirect Pro Packages do not presently support this functionality. The Technical Team will provide instructions for using your Virtual Tours Manager at the time of activation.

Private Listings Manager

The Private Listings Manager allows you to feature any listings you choose, whether or not they are in the IDX data stream. Such listings might be a listing from the IDX database that you wish to highlight, to which you want to add a Virtual Tour or show additional photos. Such listings might be those listings that your client prefers not to have in the MLS for privacy reasons. Whatever reason you decide to manually add a listing to your website, the display possibilities are limited only by your imagination!

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Private listings can only be added to IDXdirect websites. IDXdirect Pro Packages do not presently support this functionality. To add a private listing, click on “Private Listings” under “Listings Management” in your administrative tools. The first time you open your Private Listings Manager, you will be prompted to “Add New.” Upon clicking “Add New,” a table will appear asking you to describe your listing. You can add as little as a title only, or as much as the table allows. When you’ve added your desired information, click on “continue.”

The next window allows you to upload photos for your private listing. Click on “Browse” to pull your first photo from your desktop computer. Once you identify the photo on your computer, click “Upload.” You can upload up to nine photos per listing. If you do not upload photos, the default “No Photo Available” graphic will be displayed. Click the “Preview” button and you will see the detail page for your private listing which your web visitors will see when they click the “Private Listings” button on your IDXdirect website’s navigation bar. Your choices on the preview page are to return to edit mode, delete the listing or submit the listing. Submit the listing to add it to your Private Listings page on your website.

Unlike Featured Homes listings, Just Sold listings and

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Open House listings, your Private Listings are not featured on the MLS search page of your website because the quality of the photos you upload can radically differ from the quality of the IDX database photos featured in the Featured Homes, Just Sold and Open Houses boxes. Please ask your Online Marketing Consultant about placing a banner or additional button on your search page linking shoppers to the Private Listings page, if you want to ensure that they get to this page.

When your website visitors look at your Private Listings page, they will see the thumbnail descriptions of your private listings, including your comments. Clicking on the title of the listing will take your visitor to the detail page for the listing. Be sure and create an enticing title for your listing.

Final Thoughts On Managing Your Listings

Armed with the foregoing information, you are now ready to effectively promote your listings. If you have any questions or special needs, please contact support@idxdirect.com or your Online Marketing Consultant.

Chapter 6

Managing Your Registered Clients

The single most important functionality in your in your IDXdirect website or IDXdirect Pro Package is your set of Client Management Tools. These tools are intentionally simple for the reasons discussed later in this chapter. It is within these tools that you will first “meet” your online prospects and assess their readiness to proceed to opening a transaction. As discussed in other chapters, online consumers are a highly attractive demographic, but developing these leads requires a distinctly different approach than the approach typically employed in relationship-based marketing.

In relationship-based marketing, you can aggressively pursue a prospect because you come to them “recommended” by somebody that they presumably respect and you, on the

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other side of the equation, know that the prospect is well down the path to wanting to open a transaction.

Online consumers, by contrast, come to your website motivated to research and educate him- or herself about the market. Only under rare circumstances are your online consumers ready for any direct contact, much less a phone call, shortly after landing on your site. For this reason in particular, IDX products on the market that offer no interactivity or “incubation” tools are doomed to fail. The vast majority of online consumers will **not** pick up the phone to call you because they have seen a property of interest on your website during their first visit. At best, he or she will make a note and **might** return to your site at a later – that is, unless they find an agent in the interim who is running an IDXdirect website or IDXdirect Pro Package, because those packages allow consumers to conduct research without obligation and to save their search results in a coherent manner in a safe place – all without giving up a lot of contact information, making their interaction with the agent less “risky.”

With your IDXdirect website or IDXdirect Pro Package, your online consumers “park” their research on **your website**, a page where you can monitor their activities and assess how ready they are for live agent interaction. If their saved

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searches are infrequently updated or contain disparate properties, they likely should be left alone to “incubate” a bit longer. This doesn’t cost you anything in terms of time or resources and, in fact, saves you a lot of aggravation and wasted resources.

If you find your prospect is saving properties frequently and updating with similar properties, it is time to start “introducing” yourself, probably initially by email. In fact, at this point, an email address may still be all the contact information you have, but it is just as well – these consumers travel anonymously to avoid pushy sales tactics.

Start by offering resources that are consistent with what your prospect seems to be looking for – restaurants in their chosen neighborhood, for example. Remember, this is the first time you’ve expended more energy than simply monitoring this prospect’s activities. If you are clever and proficient at Internet research, you can still continue to offer valuable information with minimal effort.

At the appropriate time, offer to call your prospect to discuss additional properties not available on your website. If your prospect is ready, he or she will readily provide additional contact information.

Managing Your Registered Clients

This process of tip-toeing softly into a relationship with your prospect could take months or it could take days. The important consideration to keep in mind is that you need a system for monitoring and testing your evolving clients to assess their readiness. Importantly, you need to leave prospects alone who aren't ready to be contacted. One premature overture can send your prospect scurrying to another agent's site.

Leaving prospects alone to "incubate" on your site is virtually risk-free to you. You've promoted client loyalty by allowing your prospects a place to park their research and you've given them all the tools they need to do what they came to do – learn about the market. All of this costs you nothing except your daily monitoring and de minimis IDX subscription cost.

So, how do you manage your prospects while they incubate? Your IDXdirect website or IDXdirect Pro Package has two simple, yet powerful tools to assist you.

My Registered Clients

Clicking on "Registered Clients" under "Client Management" in your administrative tools brings up a list of all

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prospects who have registered in your IDXdirect website or IDXdirect Pro Package. Your list can be searched by name or email address.

At a glance, you have all known contact information and a live link to your prospect's email address for one-click email communications. You can delete prospects you no longer want to do business with or who have closed transactions. You can also view each client's private page on your site, called their "Watch List."

By clicking on a client's Watch List, you see what your client sees when he or she logs in after initial registration. You see thumbnail descriptions of his or her saved properties. You can also view his or her listing alerts and new listing parameters. You have all the same user capabilities that your client enjoys on this page, including the ability to expand his or her search and/or new listing parameters.

Monitoring your prospects' Watch Lists is how you track their evolution from information gatherers to transaction participants. We have carefully developed this aspect of your package to make the monitoring process as simple, easy and efficient as possible. If you have suggestions as you use this feature, please email feedback@idxdirect.com with your

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comments or suggestions.

Messaging Your Clients

Your IDXdirect website or IDXdirect Pro Package is a great place to send group messages to your registered clients. You might use this function to announce an Open House, to announce new information or resources on your website or to send an electronic newsletter.

To use this functionality, simply click “Message To Clients” under “Client Management” in your administrative tools. Choose “To All Clients” or use the CTRL key to designate multiple individuals. Type in a subject line and message and click “Preview.” In the Preview window, you can choose “Edit” or “Send.” “Edit” sends you back to the previous page to make changes to your message. “Send” forwards your message to your designated clients.

As simple as that, you are communicating with prospects for whom you likely only have an email address. Keep in mind that your prospects may not yet welcome communications from you. For regular, repeated announcements or electronic newsletters, you should consider including opt out instructions at the end of your email message.

Managing Your Registered Clients

Last Thoughts About Contacting Your Registered Clients

Although the Client Management tool is likely the most important arrow in your quiver, the instructions for using the component tools are the most simple. This is intentional. Your online consumers will resist being “managed,” so we provide you with fewer tools to support this function. Relax and let your prospects proceed at their own pace.

Chapter 7

Statistical Information Available In Your IDXdirect Pro Package

Your IDXdirect website or IDXdirect Pro Package provides you with a wealth of user information for your package. To view your traffic statistics, click “Web Traffic” under “Statistics” in your administrative tools. Here you can see hits for your IDXdirect website or IDXdirect Pro Package for today, this month and total. Hits information is a commonly provided website statistic, but it is relatively meaningless. It does not tell you if your 49 hits came from 49 unique visitors or from one person coming to your site 49 times.

Of more interest is knowing how many people are searching the MLS on your website and what they are doing

Statistical Information Available In Your IDXdirect Pro Package

with that information. For this information, your Web Traffic Manager is an invaluable tool, displaying all pertinent summary information in an easy to read table with live links to the underlying data. Your Web Traffic Manager is particularly powerful for measuring the impact of your various marketing campaigns. Do print ads or email blasts or direct mailers best bring traffic to your site? Which form of advertising brings people who ask for more information? Which form brings people who save high end listings? These questions and a host of others can all be answered by running a couple of discrete campaigns and monitoring the results with your Website Traffic Manager.

On a daily basis, your website statistics give you one-click access to a list of property requests, a list of properties saved by your prospects, a list of saved searches and a list of requests for more information. Many of these lists also include deeper links to more data, including links to the email address for your prospects.

As you use your Website Traffic Manager more and more, you will come to recognize it as a powerful and intuitive tool. It will serve both to help you monitor and assess the impact of your marketing campaigns and to help you manage your registered clients as they evolve from information seekers

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to closed transactions.

Chapter 8

Frequently Asked Questions

The following are some of our more frequently asked questions. If you have others, please email feedback@idxdirect.com and we will add them to the list for others.

What is IDX?

IDX, or "Internet Data Exchange" is a program mandated by the National Association of Realtors which allows participating brokers to bring the listings of other participating brokers to their personal websites. Technically speaking, IDX is a stream of MLS data extracted in raw form from the MLS database, manipulated by an IDX consultant and delivered to an agent's or broker's website.

Frequently Asked Questions

Do I have to have server capacity to host my MLS database?

No. The contents of the database are stored on IDXdirect's servers. Searches on your website are transferred to IDXdirect's server and the results are transferred back to your website. Your website visitor does not know that the data is not on your personal website.

How many MLS's can I have with my IDX package?

With IDXdirect's next-generation IDX solution, you can seamlessly integrate as many MLS databases on your website as you wish, providing that you belong to each MLS you request.

Why do I need IDX?

Recent industry surveys indicate that real estate buyers and sellers are rushing to the Internet to research the market. These same surveys indicate that these consumers want to conduct their research anonymously in the early stages. IDX allows consumers to access segments of the MLS database without providing any identifying information. You can also use IDX searches by your clients as an indicator of how ready they are to close a transaction. If their property saves are vague

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and/or sporadic, leave the client alone to continue shopping on your site. Clients will return if you have provided the means for them to save searches. If property saves are specific and/or frequent, step up your communication efforts because this client is ready to move.

Why do I want to give away MLS searches without obtaining contact information from my website visitors?

Consumers WANT to initiate their real estate transactions with anonymous investigation. With IDXdirect's client communication tools, including Listing Alert and Property Saves, you allow your website visitors to conduct free and anonymous searches, but require contact information if the visitor wants email alerts for new properties or to save search results.

How does IDX differ from the VOW products I've heard about?

VOW products allow website visitors access to a greater portion of the MLS database than IDX products and require that website visitors register (i.e., give up contact information) PRIOR to conducting a search. Industry surveys indicate that consumers prefer to conduct their searches anonymously, at

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least in the early stages.

Do I need a website to have IDX?

IDXdirect's IDX solution is a web application that integrates with a web page. Think of it like software for the Internet. Although IDXdirect's solution can be integrated with your Realtor.com page, we recommend that you integrate the package with your personal website. If you don't yet have your own website, consider one of our affordable template websites.

How fast can I get up and running with my IDX package?

The answer to this question depends on your MLS's connection process, but IDXdirect can often have you up and running within 48 hours of receiving your order.

I am a seller's agent. Why would I need IDX?

Sellers need to know what the market is doing in their neighborhood. IDX allows you to generate CMA's and to otherwise educate your unrealistic sellers.

Realtor.com and my MLS both offer extremely inexpensive

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framed IDX solutions. Why would I choose IDXdirect's product over a framed product?

Framed website content is yesterday's news. Framed pages load more slowly, are sometimes incompatible with newer web browsers and are composition pages incapable of being captured by search engines. Most importantly, you don't control the content of the framed portion of the page (the vendor controls it) and you can't capture any information or interaction that your client provides to the framed portion of the page.

What should I look for in an IDX product?

Look for daily updates to the search database, including photos. In today's competitive market, you and your clients need the earliest possible access to new listings. Look for speed. Website visitors will lose interest if results are not instantaneous. Look for reliability regarding your vendor's servers. If your MLS data is not accessible because your vendor's server is down, this reflects poorly on you. Most importantly, look for tools that will allow you to capture website visitor information. Without these tools, you are just giving away the searches without allowing yourself an opportunity to build relationships.

Frequently Asked Questions

How are IDX products priced?

Typically IDX products are priced by set-up and subscription. The set-up covers the price of the web application which provides the means to conduct MLS searches on your website. The subscription covers the price of your vendor hosting the data on your behalf and providing the data updates (preferably on a daily basis).

Chapter 9

Getting Technical Support

IDXdirect is committed to maintaining its excellent reputation regarding the uptime and reliability of its servers. Your clients should always be able to access your IDXdirect website and/or Pro Package. You should, therefore, have little reason to require emergency intervention. In the unlikely event that you do, our Technical Team is available by phone at 1.877.IDX4YOU during regular west coast business hours and 24/7 by email at support@idxdirect.com. The email account is closely monitored by experienced technicians and emergencies are addressed as soon as humanely possible.

For routine support requests, please email the Technical Team and they will address your concerns on a first in, first out basis.