

The Listing Race

Written by Doug Kruhm

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Listing syndication is all the rage right now. Trying to get as much exposure as possible, brokers or real estate companies, freely send their properties for sale to third party web sites. The well known sites are sites like Zillow.com, Trulia.com, Yahoo.com, Google.com and Frontdoor.com (Missing any? Let me know by commenting below).

The Scene

These third party web sites entice real estate agents, real estate brokers and the general public to give up their properties for sale in exchange for slick web page layouts, nifty web features, the promise of millions of eyeballs and PR statements convincing the general population that their site is an authority on real estate (which in most cases, it isn't).

The Trade-Off

In return for real estate companies freely sending their information, these third party sites charge brokers for upgrades like showing the broker's logo on their listings and featuring their properties. They charge agents in a similar fashion for banner ads and sidebar ads. In addition, they charge outside companies like Home Depot and Bank of America who may want to advertise on their web site.



I call this type of web site model a realtor.com model as they were the web site first to invent it for real estate. Other web sites quickly followed suit. The difference though is that Realtor.com automatically TAKES all the listing information whereas other web sites rely on the real estate companies to GIVE the information.

You can find more about this in our previous article [Real Estate Web Site RoundUp here](#).

For Example

So, for example, Great Fake FL Real Estate Co. has 100 properties listed for sale. Great Fake FL Real Estate Co. collects all the information about these 100 properties and they send them to a web site like Zillow.com, Trulia.com, Yahoo.com, Google.com and Frontdoor.com (Missing

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any? Let me know by commenting below).

Among the information being sent, like number of bathrooms and number of bedrooms and listing price, the information usually also contains a link back to the source of original information.



So if the information is coming from the real estate company, a link like VIEW MORE DETAILS will link back to the real estate company's web site.

If the information is coming from a third party advertising source, say like HOMES AND LAND, the link will direct visitors back to the HOMES AND LAND web site. And if the agent takes the energy and effort to manually retype all the information into the SYNDICATION SITE, the link will direct visitors back to the web site of their choosing, usually the agent's personal web site. Make sense?

[CAUTION: once a third party site gains enough visiting power, the site will likely cease to send visitors back to the original listing source. This is the case of <http://realestate.yahoo.com> recently. But they have since changed.]

The Great Listing Race Question

Now if these third party sites rely on information given to them, what happens when both the broker sends information about a property for sale, the agent sends information about a property for sale and a third party advertising outlet sends information about a property for sale? Who wins? Who's site will get redirected to? Who will be listed as the "Source of information"? If they have conflicting information, which of the three will show?

That's great question. I've had this happen recently. I've discovered that in these cases, each

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web site is going to react differently. While the web in general can change as fast as I write this, I'd thought I'd share the options that I've witnessed recently.

The Broker Wins



The first option, and the most common, that occurs is that the broker wins despite other information avenues. This probably happens for good reason in the sense that by legal standing, the listings or properties for sale are owned by the broker or the real estate company. So if an agent has 10 properties for sale and decides to leave the company, the properties usually stay with the real estate company and don't follow the agent. So with this thinking, information coming from the broker wins as they are the rightful owner. In addition, information coming from the broker is usually fed automatically rather than manually inputted. So it may be that automatic feeds take precedence over manual information.

EXAMPLE: Zillow.com & Trulia.com

The Agent Wins



This is an option that is witnessed on a web site like Trulia.com. The process goes something like this. The information is sent by the broker and property shows. The agent can manually create an account and CLAIM the listing as their own. Once they do this they have the option of 'enhancing' the property usually by adding more photos, etc. But the agent cannot change information fed to the web site as this is against law (you can't advertise a property for \$1 million on one site and \$1.2 million on another). Part of 'enhancing' the property usually includes changing the web site that the listing backlinks to. In most cases, the agent's web site.

EXAMPLE: Zillow.com & Trulia.com, only if agent claims the listing.

The Most Information Wins

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EXAMPLE: Frontdoor.com is a popular real estate site. The listing information is the most recent information wins.

While this is common, it can also lead to an information ping pong match. The process is something like this. A real estate company sends information on Monday morning. That information shows on the third party site. If the agent sends it in the afternoon through the course of their work day, it changes to the agents info. As normal practice the real estate company sends the info every morning, so the information is sent again on Tuesday morning and consequently changed back to the real estate company information.

All Sources Win



I've witnessed this at Google.com. If Google, or more accurately Google Maps, receives information from various sources, the web site will display the listing once in the results but it will display full information from each source when viewing the details and give each credit for the information.

I've also witnessed this at Frontdoor.com. If Frontdoor receives information from various sources, the web site will display the listing twice, once from each source. In this case, it leads to confusion among the web site visitors. Why would one property be listed twice in the first place? Makes sense to me but then again I do this a living. But it doesn't make sense to Joe Visitor.

EXAMPLE: Google.com & Frontdoor.com

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Conclusion

Hopefully I've given you some insightful information to think about. The listing race heated up starting in 2009 and continues to rage in 2010 and will continue to do so in the future.

Until then, agents can become furious over the fact that their information or their hired virtual tour information is beat out by the broker information.

Brokers play information parade as they freely toss-out property information like pieces of candy from high above their parade floats down to grovelling web sites that secretly do back-ally techniques like black market merchants.

Home buyers are confused as to why real estate information is spread throughout the web in such a hodge podge manner. Why some properties show once and other show twice.

Home sellers are confused as to why sometimes their property for sale is linked back to their broker site and sometime they link back a completely different site.

This beautiful mess is the current real estate web landscape. We'll let you know if we find something different.