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## Online Marketing: Pocono Real Estate Isn't Just for Honeymooners Anymore

January 4, 2009 @ 1:10 pm In Today's Top Story, Business Development

By Mike Parker



RISMEDIA, Jan. 4, 2009—Chances are good that if you were to flash a word in front of a person and they had to spit out the first thing that came to mind that the word “Poconos” would elicit “honeymoon.”

Before letting your mind fill with visions of heart-shaped Jacuzzi tubs, champagne specials and that sort of thing, we are not talking about those kinds of honeymoons in this article.

No, we're talking about the kind of honeymoon that brings more than two dozen home sales to you each year: we're talking about successful Internet marketing for Realtors. And what self-respecting real estate professional wouldn't want to have two dozen sales from their website each year?

The Poconos Mountains of Pennsylvania are within easy driving distance of Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, New York and Boston. Containing over 150 lakes, myriad attractions and the peace and quiet so lacking in the city, this huge area of Eastern Pennsylvania is visited annually by millions of people. It also happens to be the physical place where Bev and Malcolm Waring maintain their Realty Executives brokerage. However, Bev and Malcolm will tell you that they have a second “office,” where 83% of their 27 sales came from in 2008; that office is [www.bevwaring.com](http://www.bevwaring.com) and it is that office that feeds them the bulk of their leads and sales. Pocono Real Estate encompasses a large geographic area (2,000 sq miles) with many different towns and communities, which also can be a challenge to keep focused in a website and in the process of selling online.

### Their Internet success is a real estate honeymoon

Bev and Malcolm are husband and wife and have been married long enough (26 years) that they would qualify as past the honeymoon stage of marriage. But, it is in their business marriage that the Internet has helped the honeymoon to continue: “This year alone, the site has brought us 22 closed sales, 2 leases and 5 pendings, with just one scheduled past December,” Malcolm told us in a recent phone interview. “76% of our sales were from the website, including where Bev was the listing agent. If you don't count listings, then 83% of our sales were from the website. This success is also a major part of Bev's listing presentation. Sellers understand the importance of Internet exposure and respond very favorably when we show them the website and talk about our search engine rankings. It helps close many a listing for us. And if anyone out there wonders about how the Internet brings buyers from outside their geographic area, let me tell you that our website brought us buyers who were from out of our area who comprised a full 72% of our sales this year. We would not have had a chance at those 18 out-of-area buyers if we weren't able to be found on the Internet when people go looking for Pocono Real Estate.”

### Different backgrounds with complementary skills

Bev Waring has been an agent for three-and-one-half years; Malcolm has been licensed for two-and-one-half years. Bev handles the sales; Malcolm built and manages the website. Malcolm has a serious IT background and has been able to incorporate such user-friendly

features as a custom neighborhood mapping system that shows prospective buyers where various housing projects are ongoing and where each MLS listing is located (See the site MLS Search button).

Because Malcolm knows IT, he put this feature on a separate page and not on the homepage, where it would have greatly reduced the ability of his site to be found. "People aren't kidding when they say 'Content is King,' Malcolm stated; "unfortunately for so many people who should know better, mapping solutions are not what search engines see as 'content.' You can have a nice looking site or an ugly site but if it has fresh content that is related to what the Internet shopper is looking for, it is much more likely to succeed."

Bev and Malcolm also realized early on that in addition to having that fresh content and lots of information for their prospective clients that it was an absolute requirement for their site to utilize the best search engine optimization (SEO) so that Internet buyers could find it. As Malcolm puts it: "I'm a full-time IT database consultant—mainly a database architect. I initially got my license to help Bev handle the overflow on weekends. I knew that at my billable rate it would cost me far more to learn SEO, to stay up-to-date on SEO and to monitor and implement it for the site than it would cost to subscribe to a good search program. Because of my IT background, I also knew that a solitary IT person, no matter how good they are, cannot avail themselves of the total SEO resources that the leading company can. I looked around the web and one day I saw a message board thread about success with SEO. I researched the company that the bloggers were talking about, then checked out that company's client testimonials and we've been with CompassSearch ever since."

### **They tried Pay-per-Click first**

"When we started and before we found our organic SEO provider, we used pay-per-click to give us an Internet presence", Malcolm told us. "Once our organic SEO subscription kicked in and we got onto the first page of Google, we were able to drop the pay-per-click and save that large expense," he continued. "We started selling homes right after we got on page one and we have been selling them ever since."

### **SEO in the current economic climate**

"It is a classic mistake to cut advertising and marketing dollars too much when things slow down," Malcolm offered. "We could not be this successful without the Internet, and we have had only one really slow month during all this bad news. In my work I have seen so many websites from all types of businesses that you just can't find when you do a Google search for them. Our CompassSearch subscription gets results. Even in this market, people are still looking for Pocono Real Estate on the Internet. We just have to get them to our website to have a chance at doing business with them, and I don't view the SEO that does that for us as advertising, I consider that SEO as necessary to our success as our license to sell real estate. After all, if people can't find you and don't know about you, you can't sell them a property in any market, let alone this one!"

Once again, we see it is the progressive agent who embraces the Internet that continues to succeed, no matter where they are located. Pocono Real Estate is not just for honeymooners anymore, but the Internet is where all real estate professionals must be— 84% of all residential homes sales, in fact, happen there. You've simply got to be there and be effective—especially in these times.

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