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REcampus



Website and Marketing Best Practices Guide*

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As you plan your site, consider a wish list of function or content areas that you might want to include in the future.

Website Strategy: before you begin

Before you begin designing your site, take time to develop a basic marketing plan to ensure your design allows for your short- and long-term needs. That plan should include the following:

- **Define your audience.** Who are they? What types of sites do they visit? How tech-savvy are they? This will help you organize your site content to make the most sense to your users.
- **Plan your promotion.** How will you market your site? Examine how you currently promote your business and have plans in place prior to site launch on how you can incorporate messaging about the site.
- **What future functions would you like to incorporate into your site?** Consider a wish list of function or content areas that you might want to include in the future. Planning for these early can save you time and money later if you build with future growth and functionality updates in mind.
- **How will you maintain your site?** The best part of the web is its dynamic nature. You can change things quickly to fit content or market needs. Be sure to have a plan in place for updates—who will make them, how they will be made, what your proofing process will be, who will monitor the site regularly to ensure content is current, and who will address incoming questions from visitors.
- **Website Design Resources.** If you don't have access to a web designer, you may be able to find a resource in an intern from your local college or university. If you want to design the site yourself, there are great resources available online, including templates and website builders.

Resources to help you develop your website strategy:

www.thesitewizard.com

webdesign.about.com

www.netidnow.com

www.moonfruit.com

Some examples of templates and web builders:

www.wix.com

www.gybo.com

www.godaddy.com

www.weebly.com

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If you have a tech-savvy audience that will access content from tablets and phones, make sure the site design supports easy viewing from these devices.



Website Design: creating a visitor-friendly site

Before creating site designs, it's helpful to define which elements your pages will contain, including:

- **Navigation links.** Which links will remain on pages throughout the site?
- **Site functions.** Functions include site search, RSS feeds, newsletter sign-ups, registration or sign-ins, contact links, and so forth. What are your needs today? How do you see them changing? Develop a wish list of capabilities that you might like to phase into future design updates.
- **Design.** What brand elements should the site connect with? Graphic treatments, logos, imagery, color palette, and so on.
- **Copy.** What is the brand voice? How does that voice speak to the different audiences it encounters online?

Initial Site Design

Good design uses simple navigation to quickly walk users through their chosen content path. A few key considerations:

- **Minimize the number of clicks.** Use links and other navigation tools to direct users to information as quickly as possible.
- **Choose clean and simple fonts and colors.** Some print fonts don't translate well to the web. Choose web-safe fonts to ensure that visitors see what you've intended with even the most basic systems.
- **Use images and graphics that support the content.** Unnecessary icons and graphics create visual clutter. Always be sure to assign alt tags to images in case visitors view the site with images turned off.
- **Keep your audience in mind.** If you have a tech-savvy audience that will access content from tablets and phones, make sure the site design supports easy viewing from these devices by keeping key links easy-to-find and near the top of the page.
- **Keep copy concise.** Enable visitors to click links if they are interested in more or related information.
- **Design with content hierarchy in mind.** Important items that are viewed often or that are key revenue generators need to be prominent. Using web analytics tools that allow you to analyze visitor paths can help you prioritize where items should appear on a page.

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An important step in your website launch is to create and maintain an XML sitemap for your site and point the search engines to it.

SEO guideline resources:

[www.seomoz.org/
beginners-guide-to-seo](http://www.seomoz.org/beginners-guide-to-seo)

[http://googlewebmastercentral.
blogspot.com/2010/01/google-seo-
resources-for-beginners.html](http://googlewebmastercentral.blogspot.com/2010/01/google-seo-resources-for-beginners.html)

Keyword research tool:

adwords.google.com

XML Sitemap Submission:

Support.google.com/webmasters

Web analytics tools:

www.google.com/analytics

[www.adobe.com/solutions/digital-
analytics.html](http://www.adobe.com/solutions/digital-analytics.html)

www.webtrends.com

Search Engine Optimization: organic search

Website content plays an important part in getting your site found by search engines. You can improve your site's search engine ranking simply by having site content that is relevant to search terms used through search engines.

Page Content: Your page text should include instances of keywords that your audience will use to find services like yours (e.g., real estate education, realtor licensing, or home appraisal training).

Meta Tags: Meta elements provide information about a given webpage, most often to help search engines categorize them correctly. They are inserted into the HTML document, but are often not directly visible to a user visiting the site. Search engines index your webpage based upon these keywords and phrases, and then display the results to users. The closer your tags match the words that are entered in the search field, the higher you place in the results page. Meta tags can be modified anytime, so you can change them periodically to test different tags for the best result. Meta tags have lost a good deal of their impact over time since many sites have unscrupulously loaded their Meta content with terms to fool search engines, but it's still a good idea to incorporate them into your site.

Title Tags: Inserted in the HTML code of a page, a title tag provides search engines with a big-picture description of a page's content. This tag is one of the most useful, and most often overlooked, content pieces that can improve your site's search engine rankings. The title tag should include your company name and a relevant keyword phrase on which the page content is based. Note: Title tags and Meta tags should include unique information that applies specifically to a given page's content.

Site Submission: Once thought to be a critical component of getting your site identified by search engines, site submission is now a basic step to getting your site found. An important step in your website build is to create and maintain an XML sitemap for your site and point the search engines to it.

If you don't submit your site to the search engines, you rely on being discovered by search engine spiders. If you have strong content, site structure and links from directories, blogs, and so forth, you will be found. But using an XML sitemap can decrease the time it takes for search engines to find you.

Ongoing Analysis: Services such as Google Analytics, Adobe, or web trends can help you track visitor traffic and identify common paths they take. You can use this data to monitor how visitors behave on your site and adjust content and links to steer them to content you want them to see.

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A key to link exchanges is careful screening to ensure the linking sites are credible and relevant.

Social media applications:

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_media

Search engine advertising (PPC):

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pay_per_click

www.google.com/ads/adwords

Remarketing resources:

www.google.com/ads/innovations/remarketing.html

Online Marketing: expanding your site awareness

Banner Ads: Banner advertisements can help attract new students to your school. These clickable ads appear on third-party websites. Unlike search engine ads, banner ads primarily use graphics, versus simple text, with a strong call to action. Many associations or professional organizations accept banner ads on their sites. The REcampus web buttons can also serve in this capacity.

Link Exchange Program: Link exchange programs offer an inexpensive option to attract new students to your site. Link exchanges are usually free programs where exchange partners, such as vendors, service providers, or professional associations in which your school does business, will put a link to your school site on their site in exchange for a return link on your site. Many sites will create “resources” pages to house or solicit link exchanges with others. A key to link exchanges is careful screening to ensure the linking sites are credible and relevant.

Social Media: In recent years, social media has become a powerful way to quickly spread information at a grassroots level. Social media relies on user-generated content, including that found in blogs, message boards, podcasts, forums, and a number of other formats. Being active in social media forums including Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and numerous others can increase your exposure to targeted audiences and create a platform for linking to your site content.

Search Engine Advertising: This paid online advertising drives traffic to your site. Also known as “Pay-per-click” or “PPC” advertising, these clickable text ads appear on the right or top of the results screen during an organic search. Pay-per-click campaigns are affordable because you control how much you want to spend. You set a monthly maximum budget and limit on how much you are willing to pay for each ad click. You are charged according to how many clicks your ad generates or until you’ve reached your budget limit and your ad stops running.

Remarketing Advertising: Remarketing lets you show ads to users who have previously visited your website as they browse the web. Remarketing is a powerful way to stay engaged with your target audience. Presenting them with highly relevant ads and offers across the web, and making sure your brand is top of mind when they’re ready to buy, can radically improve ROI.

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Checklist for creating effective emails:

- Connect your email visually with your brand.
- Keep messages short and graphics simple.
- Communicate timely and relevant information recipients will find helpful.
- Use links to offer details instead of extensive text.
- Keep the most important information and links close to the top.
- Always include a direct link to a contact person for questions.
- Subject lines are important. Consider testing them to see what works best for your audience.
- Follow [CANSPAM guidelines](#) to prevent your messages from being blocked.
- Tailor your email frequency to your audience. More than weekly will likely result in increased "unsubscribe" requests.
- Use opt-in lists only. If you are using an outside list, provide recipients with a means to opt-in to future communications.
- Keep lists clean and frequently updated.

Email Marketing: growing your business through email

Email Marketing

Email can be one of the most affordable, accountable, and effective marketing tools you'll find. It enables you to stay connected with your membership, students, and prospects with updated information on your offerings and other newsworthy items including:

- Education updates
- Approaching CE deadlines
- Professional development articles to help agents compete (is there a corresponding title in your bookstore)
- General information on prelicensing requirements, etc.
- Relevant items in the news and regulatory updates

Email List Development

If you don't have an email list, begin by collecting email addresses and contact information from current students and prospects. To help find new recruits:

- Post a "Join Our List" button on your website.
- Purchase lists from state regulatory boards (although some may not allow emailing).
- Have a signup sheet or "Join our List" form at career fairs and trade shows you attend.
- Send a postal mailing driving students and prospects online to provide email addresses for future emailed information.
- Use a clear opt-in statement that specifically addresses how the visitor's name will be used; provide an option for unsubscribing to the list in the future.
- Never share your list with outside parties without recipient permission.

Email marketing resources:

search.constantcontact.com/email-marketing/index.jsp

www.icontact.com/

www.silverpop.com/marketing-resources/index.html

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Increasing the number of REcampus links on your site, and making them stand out visually, increases the number of visitors who might see your REcampus page and make a purchase.

Make REcampus Work for You

Placing Your REcampus Link

In addition to posting your REcampus link on your school's main education page, consider other pages throughout your website where it might make sense. Increasing the number of REcampus links on your site, and making them stand out visually, increases the number of visitors who might see your REcampus page and make a purchase.

- Your homepage
- A recruiting page
- A member benefits page

REcampus Web Buttons & Banner Ads

The **Web Button Instructions** contains instructions on posting the REcampus web buttons to your site. These buttons link directly to your REcampus page and can also serve as banner ads for other websites. Web buttons and banner ads expand your potential audience by reaching prospects outside your school and connecting them to your REcampus or website. Some options might include the following:

- Many websites have exchange programs where they will post your ad in exchange for advertising in kind on your site.
- Local industry or community sites might have a resources page on which your school might be able to post a link.

Increase Your Revenue Through Related Products

Because order fulfillment on REcampus is done through Dearborn, consider carrying other Dearborn products in addition to just course materials. Real estate professionals are always looking for new ideas and ways to get ahead, and adding professional development or exam prep titles to your bookstore is an easy way to generate more revenue without incurring additional expense. The broader the collection in your online bookstore, the more attractive your school will be to both prospective licensees and practicing professionals.

Product Image Links

If you run a promotion for a professional development title or a new course, place embedded REcampus links in course images to attract attention and create additional links to your REcampus site.

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Our eLearning Support Center is available to assist you:

Monday–Friday

8 am–10 pm ET at

888.213.5124 or

retchsupport@dearborn.com

All emails will be answered within 24 hours including weekends.



Web Button Instructions

Web buttons are a great way to help market your REcampus page through prominent, direct links from any website, including your own.

Maximize Web Button Effectiveness By:

- Posting them on your website homepage as a visible and immediate reminder each time students visit your site.
- Posting them on other website pages, including those that mention education, classes, distance education, bookstore, or state licensing/CE requirements.
- Using them in pay-per-click advertising campaigns or posting them to other industry, association, and community websites to increase outside exposure.

How To Post And Activate Web Buttons:

You should have received REcampus web buttons through an email from your Client Experience Manager. If not, you can download the buttons [here](#).

1. Download the REcampus web button(s) that you would like to use and then upload to your website's image folder.
2. To activate the button(s) on your website, place your school's REcampus link around the source code for the button. An example of what this code looks like is below.

```
<a href="http://portal.recampus.com/re/schoolcode"></a>
```

Please note: Before you add the code above, you will need to replace the highlighted URL with your school's REcampus link.

If you are having trouble accessing the buttons displayed below, please contact your Client Experience Manager at 800.958.6707 or by email at salesops@dearborn.com.



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Samples of E-communications:

[Website announcement](#)[Email messages](#)[E-newsletter messages](#)

Sample E-Communications

An effective online marketing program should include electronic communications with your students or prospective students to provide them with news and information on new courses available, approaching deadlines, changing regulations, and so on. Establishing a regular communication schedule, whether that be once a month, or once a quarter, is essential to maintaining the perception of your school as a key resource and partner in the careers of your students and prospective students.

Click the buttons to the left to find examples of email blast messages, website announcements, and e-newsletter content you can model to help promote your REcampus site.

Website Announcement

The following is an example of an announcement you can put on your school's website homepage or education page to drive traffic to your REcampus site. This announcement should be posted alongside your REcampus web button for maximum impact.

We give you the flexibility to complete required prelicensing and continuing education with online courses you can take anytime, anywhere, at your convenience. [Click here](#) (insert the link to your REcampus page) to see specific online course information.

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Website announcement

Email messages

E-newsletter messages

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Email Messages

The following are examples of email messages you can use to promote REcampus.

Example #1 – introduce new courses:

Subject: Online Prelicensing and CE Courses Now Available

Dear Student,

Joe's School of Real Estate now offers a new option for our prelicensing and CE students. Our new online classes use all the same top-quality content of our live classes, but can be taken from the comfort of your home or office. Click here (insert the link to your REcampus page) to find out more about what online courses are available, or call us at 1.800.123.4567 for more information.

Example #2 – reminder of approaching state deadline:

Subject: Complete Your CE Online

Dear Student,

We'd like to remind you that this month is the deadline for completing your required CE hours.

Don't feel like you can find the time to attend a class? Our new online CE classes use all the same top-quality content of our live classes, but can be taken from the comfort of your home or office. Click here (insert the link to your REcampus page) to sign up for your online CE class today.

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E-Newsletter Messages

The following are some ideas of how you can incorporate REcampus messaging into your e-newsletter. If you don't have any new REcampus related news to share in a particular issue, you should still consider posting your REcampus web button in the e-newsletters to increase potential visitors and build awareness.

Example #1 – introduce new courses:

24/7 Online Prelicensing and CE Courses Now Available

Joe's School of Real Estate now offers an exciting new option for prelicensing and CE students. Sign up today for one of our new online classes. These classes use all the same top-quality content of our live classes but can be taken from the comfort of your home or office, at your convenience. Click here (insert the link to your REcampus page) to find out more about what online courses are available, or call us at 1.800.123.4567 for more information.

Example #2 – reminder of approaching state deadline:

Are You Ready For This Month's CE Deadline?

Our new online CE classes use all the same top-quality content of our live classes, but can be taken from the comfort of your home or office. So you don't have to worry about finding time to make it to class. Get your CE credits on your own time. Click here (insert the link to your REcampus page) to find out more.