



Online Sales and Marketing for Home Builders

Your guide to getting more people visiting your website,
setting appointments, and buying homes.



As a home builder, you may be wondering how to reach more potential customers without spending a fortune?

ONLINE SALES AND MARKETING IS THE ANSWER.

Modern home buyers live in a digital world and that's how they want to search for a new home. They go online to find builders and communities in their area. Before contacting anybody, they want to browse through a bunch of potential home builders and narrow them down to a select few.

Can home buyers go online to experience what it's like to live in your homes and communities? Does your website have floor plan pages with great photography and detailed property information? Do your online marketing materials make it clear what comes standard and what upgrades they can get for their budget?

Even when you know there are things you could do to grow your business, it's often tough to pinpoint where to focus your attention and what changes need to be made. That's why we've created this guide. We want to help you identify areas of opportunity and provide you with an online sales and marketing strategy that will help ensure your success.

Let's get started.

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Online Sales and Marketing for Home Builders

In this guide, I'm going to outline the marketing tactics, website features, and tech you need in place to create an online sales and marketing program for your company. These proven methods align with how modern home buyers want to shop, and when done right, will give you the best results for your money.

When you follow the strategy outlined in this guide, you'll get more qualified home buyers reaching out to you and it will be easier for your sales team to sell more homes. You will better understand what it takes to create an automated system that converts your website from a passive marketing brochure to an active sales machine.

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4 STAGES OF THE SALES FUNNEL

“One hundred percent of home buyers are influenced by the internet and online tools today.”

– ProBuilder.com

Aligning your sales funnel with the 4 stages of the home buying process.

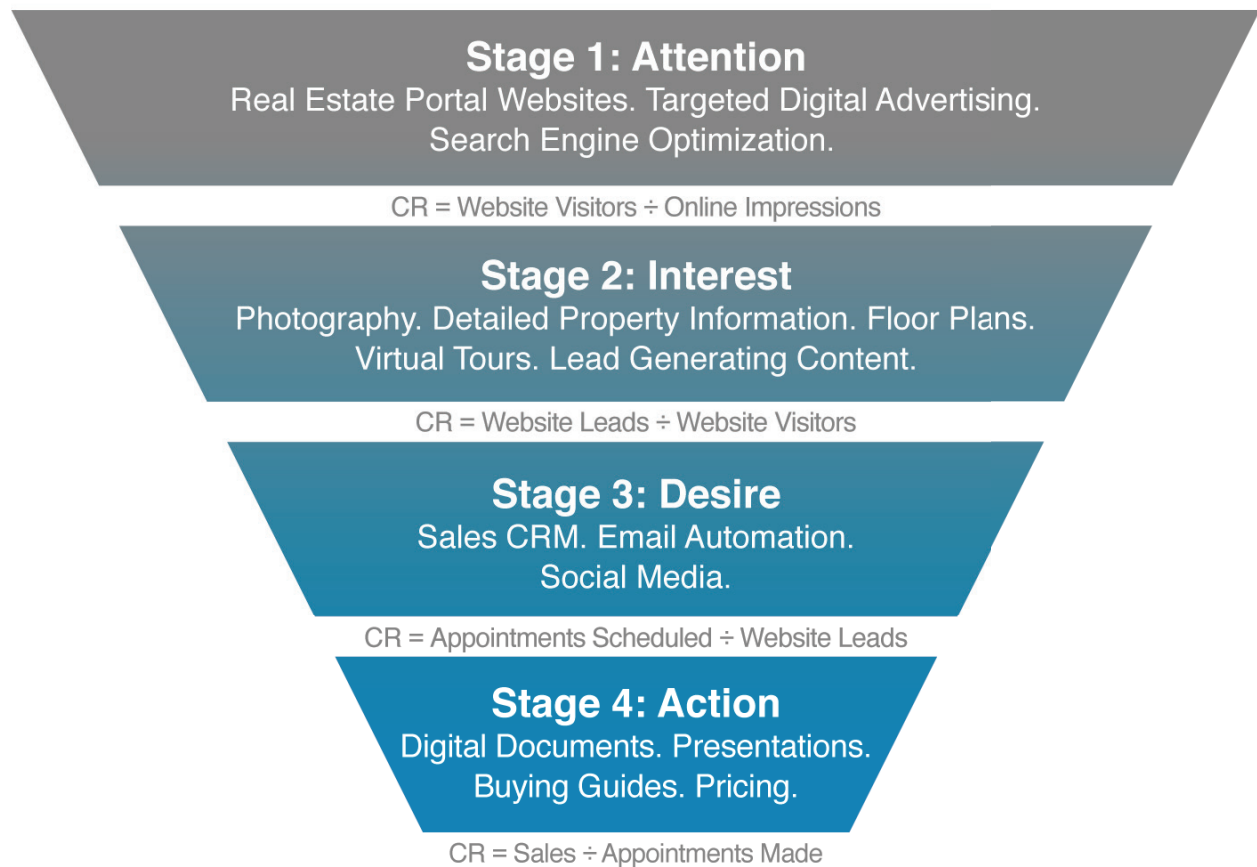
The AIDA model—Attention, Interest, Desire, Action—is widely used in marketing and advertising. It describes 4 stages of the purchasing process and is commonly referred to as the “sales funnel”. We are using it in this guide to illustrate the stages a home buyer goes through when purchasing a home.

The first stage is the time when somebody becomes aware of your homes and communities. The second and third stages are when a potential buyer’s initial interest grows into a desire for what you are selling. The final stage is the desired outcome of the sales funnel, which is the time when they decide to buy.

When you think of sales and marketing in terms of each stage of the sales funnel, it becomes easier to see why you need to include content and tools that encourage home buyers to progress from one stage to the next. Looking at your marketing and advertising strategy in this way will help you gain insight into what tactics will be most effective at different stages.

Another important component of your online sales and marketing strategy is measuring the conversion rate (CR) between each stage. Keeping track of these results helps you understand how well your online marketing strategy is working. Instead of guessing, you will be able to pinpoint what areas need more attention to ensure you are getting the best return on your investment.

Home builder marketing tactics, website features, and tech for each stage of the sales funnel.



CR = Conversion Rate

Benchmark conversion rate metrics for measuring how well your online sales and marketing program is working (1).

1% to 3%	20% to 35%	20% to 25%	30% to 35%
Online Visitors to Leads	Leads to Appointments	Appointments to Sales	Percentage of All Home Sales

Additional Takeaways

- If you're considering implementing an online sales program from scratch, you can expect a 5 percent to 10 percent increase in sales the first year.
- For new programs, the conversion rate for *Leads to Appointments* is 20%. For established programs, the conversion rate is 30% to 35%.
- Online leads that become appointments are two to three times more likely to convert to a sale than walk-in traffic.
- The standard overall contribution from a well-practiced online sales program is over 30% of home sales. Many established online programs are contributing over 40%.
- If you aren't seeing numbers as high as these, your prospects may not be seeing you online, or there's a breakdown in the process.

STAGE 1: ATTENTION

“Finding the right property was ranked highest among all home buyers as the most difficult step in home buying.”

– National Association of Realtors, *Real Estate in a Digital Age* (2)

Getting home buyers to visit your website.

Most likely, your buyers start their search for a new home online. Design your marketing and advertising efforts to maximize this opportunity. Real estate listing websites, targeted digital advertising, and SEO are the best methods for getting potential home buyers to visit your website.

Real Estate Portal Websites

Online portals like Zillow, Trulia, and other MLS sites are the frequently the first source people use when searching for homes. They provide a simple and efficient method of finding properties and do a great job of incorporating important real estate website features.

Real estate portal features that matter most to home buyers (3):

- Property search with maps, filters, keywords, and images.
- New listing notifications.
- Property details like square footage, lot size, rooms, mortgage estimates, and property taxes.
- Neighborhood details like school district ratings, crime statistics, and local shopping.
- Reviews from previous customers.

Using real estate portal sites is a great way to introduce your homes and communities to buyers. The search options help prequalify people. When someone visits your site from a real estate portal they are more likely to be a good fit. Real estate portal sites are an important place to market your homes and an important source of traffic for your website.

SEO (Search Engine Optimization)

Ideally, your company's website would have the top spot when someone searches for "home builder in [your market]". If you don't already rank #1 for that phrase, and other similar phrases, then a comprehensive SEO strategy is how to get your website there.

To get your website to rank well, it takes a combination of SEO efforts. Some are in your control and others are out of your control. The most important ranking factor is your website content. Another important factor is proof of your credibility—i.e. backlinks from reputable websites.

Sites with great content and lots of reputable backlinks have a better chance of ranking highly in search engine results. Since you'll get more website visits from potential customers when you rank higher, it's easy to see the benefits of doing everything you can to take those top spots.

Targeted Digital Advertising

Organic SEO is a long-term strategy and not easy for home builders to dominate. It can take a considerable amount of time and effort to do so. As a result, many builders use targeted digital advertising.

Some of the benefits of targeted digital advertising are:

- It's much easier to track the effectiveness of your marketing efforts and quantify the ROI
- You can turn ads on and off as needed—to ramp up or closeout neighborhoods for example
- Targeting options make it possible for you to decide who your ads will be shown to

If you pay for advertising on Google search, your ads will be shown when somebody is searching for new homes in your area. You set your budget and only pay for clicks on your ads. To help you target the right customers, tools are available to help you determine which search terms to go for. You can be very specific with which keyword searches display your ads.

Facebook uses a different strategy. They allow you to show your ads to specific people based on demographics and interests garnered from Facebook profile data.

Facebook and Google can also pinpoint IP addresses of users' computers who have visited your website. This allows you to show your ads (re-market) to those same users on Facebook or Google's partner websites. When a home buyer visits your website then sees your ads shortly after, it helps build top-of-mind awareness.

Another successful strategy is to target Facebook users who have similar profiles to your current buyers. This is done by uploading your contact list into Facebook's advertising platform. Using AI, a lookalike audience is created that you can advertise to. It's a powerful tactic.

LinkedIn also has similar advertising possibilities that are especially effective if you want to market your new homes and communities to Realtors.

The main downside with targeted digital advertising is that it is a pay to play model, which means your ads will stop running as soon as you stop paying. A common strategy is to work on SEO while running your digital ads. Over time, your SEO will start to show results, then you can cut back on your digital ad spending.

STAGE 2: INTEREST

“For all buyers, photos of the property combined with detailed information about properties for sale were cited as the most valuable aspects of a website.”

– National Association of Realtors, *Real Estate in a Digital Age*

Getting home buyers interested with useful website features and helpful content.

Your online marketing efforts, including real estate portal sites, targeted digital advertising, and seo should all direct buyers back to a well-planned website. Getting people to your site is a good start, but you still need to get them interested in your homes and communities before they will contact you. Useful website features and helpful content is how you do it.

Useful Website Features

People expect home builder websites to have professional photography, detailed property information, interactive maps, digital floor plans, and virtual tours.

Website features buyers find the most useful (3):

- 87% Photos
- 85% Detailed property information
- 52% Floor plans
- 46% Virtual tours
- 42% Contact information

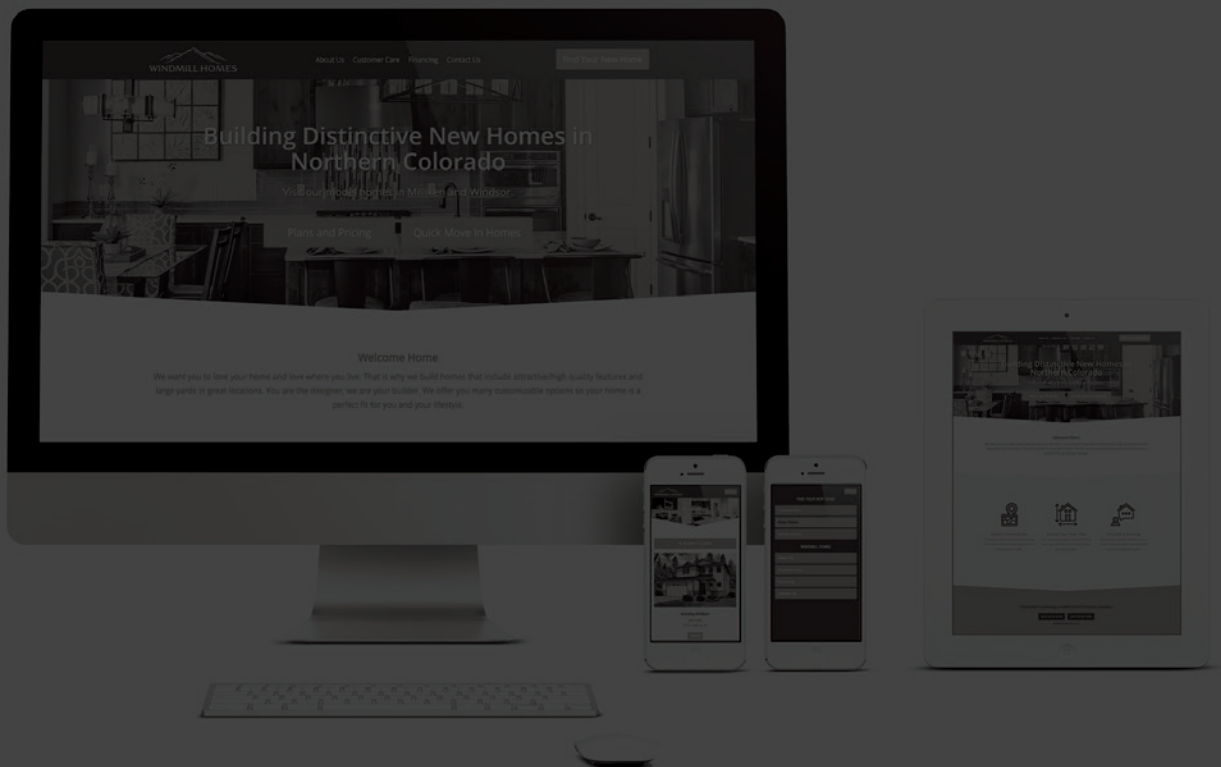
Home buyers want details. They want to look through your floor plans and see pictures clearly indicating what comes standard and what is optional. They want to see what lots you have available, what the premiums are, and what floorplans can be built on each one. They also want to have access to all that information while using their phones and the ability to download it to print it out for later.

In most cases, home buyers that visit your website will also visit several of your competitors and compare their options before making any appointments. The builders that do the best job of providing the information people are looking for will get the most appointments. It's that simple.

To see how all of these pieces come together, take a look at our case study for [Windmill Homes](#).

“Our entire website has changed for the better. It is clean, easy to update, and speaks to our buyers.”

– Windmill Homes, Trena Kloss



Lead Generating Content

An effective content strategy should include both public ‘blog’ articles and also downloadable content that is accessed by filling out a contact form. Your content could include topics like:

- What to Expect When Building a Custom Home
- Important Questions to Ask Every Home Builder
- Which Flooring is Best for Your Lifestyle?
- Granite vs Quartz vs Wood Countertops
- Benefits of Building an Energy Star Rated Home
- First-Time Home Buyer Guide
- Is a Ranch or 2-Story Right for You?
- Benefits of New Construction Homes
- Should You Finish Your Basement Now or Later?
- Which Upgrades Add the Most Value to Your Home?

If your articles and downloads provide detailed information that answer questions well, people will look around your site longer and read more. They will think of you as experts in home building and will be inclined to reach out by phone or through your contact form when they have more questions.

On its own, content doesn’t usually result in a sale. However, the right content strategy will definitely set you apart from your competitors, improve your SEO, and lead to future appointments. It works.

| Answering common questions with an ebook.

NOCO ENERGY STAR® Homes created an ebook to help people understand new home construction standards and the benefits of energy efficiency features. Included in the ebook are definitions of common terms, in-depth explanations of nationally recognized programs, and an illustration to show how they stack up against each other.

To further their efforts, NOCO ENERGY STAR® Homes also created a condensed version of the ebook as a brochure to hand out at model homes and events. The brochure gives a quick overview of the benefits and prominently features the URL to download the full, free guide.



STAGE 3: DESIRE

“When done right, the ROI for email marketing can be as high as 4400%. That’s \$44 for every dollar spent on an email marketing campaign.”

– Campaign Monitor (4)

Keeping in touch with your potential home buyers.

When people visit your website for the first time, they probably won't be ready to call or set up an appointment. With this in mind, it's important to offer something of value that they can sign up for so you can keep in touch and build on their initial interest.

Email newsletters and access to PDF Downloads are tried-and-true offers. People are interested in buying guides because they want to know how the process of buying a home works. They also want to be informed about pricing updates, new floor plans, and promotional offers.

Sales CRM and Email Automation

When somebody reaches out to you for more information, you don't have long to create desire for your homes and communities. The average length of search before finding the right home is only 10 weeks (2). To make the most of this short time frame, you want to get your sales and marketing team operating at peak efficiency.

Integrate your website with a sales CRM and email automation software to follow up with your contacts more efficiently. Use your CRM to send automated email campaigns to buyers. Set up triggers in your CRM to remind your sales team about tasks that need to be completed—such as making follow-up phone calls.

When developing the content for your automated campaigns, start with emails written to create desire. Emails sent later in the campaign should be written to move people towards taking an action like setting up an appointment or getting prequalified for a mortgage.

Email subjects can include:

- Introduction: *Thank You for Your Interest*
- Creating Desire: *Community Stories and Photos of Your Homes*
- Social Proof: *Testimonials from Current Homeowners*
- What Makes You Different: *Your Building Process and Included Features*
- Service They Can Expect: *Showcase Your Design Center and Warranty*
- Take the Next Step: *Finance Options, Getting Prequalified*
- Take the Next Step: *Set up an Appointment for a Tour*
- Overcome Objections: *We Understand, Choosing a Home is Difficult*

To get the most out of your automated marketing efforts, segment your contacts using their responses on your contact form. For example, send one email campaign to first-time home buyers and a different campaign to empty nesters. Providing personalized email messaging in this way can be quite persuasive.

Social Media

Networks like Facebook, Instagram, Youtube, and Pinterest allow you to interact directly with your current homeowners and potential buyers. You can answer questions and exchange comments one-on-one.

Social media is mostly a public platform so the way you interact with your home buyers is very transparent. When people see how you respond to compliments and how you follow up on issues they will learn a lot about your company. This fact alone can increase people's desire to work with you.

Here are some more examples of how you can use social media to create desire for your homes and neighborhoods:

- Use Facebook to help people imagine what it will be like to buy a home from you. Post milestone pictures like home buyers breaking ground, choosing design center options, getting their keys, standing in front of their new home, etc.
- Create a referral program to encourage your current buyers to document their new home journey and share photos on social media sites like Facebook and Instagram.
- Instagram could be used for behind the scenes looks and sneak peeks of the design and building process. You can also post pictures that show side by side comparisons of standard features vs upgrades.
- Youtube could be used to post quick video tours of recently built homes or video testimonials by your home buyers.
- Pinterest is great for organizing your photos by topics of interest to home buyers. For example, you can create boards for interior design styles, color palettes, bathrooms, kitchens, landscaping, etc.

It's important not to try doing all of the social media channels at once. Start with the one that sounds like the best fit for you and experiment. It won't take long for you to figure out what gets the most response in terms of likes, shares, and comments. Once you are getting the results you want, then you can decide if you would like to branch out to other channels.

STAGE 4: ACTION

“Only 50% of firm’s websites are providing information about the home buying and selling process.”

– National Association of Realtors, *Real Estate in a Digital Age*

Using your home builder website to help with sales presentations.

A good home builder website should be your sales team's best friend. It should not only provide them with new ways to reach home buyers, but also support them when they're presenting your homes at the sales office, over the phone, or in the field.

Your website is a natural place to store digital documents, video presentations, and pricing calculators. The goal is to construct a site that works in harmony with your sales process and makes everything easier and more efficient for home buyers, the sales team, and your business.

Since you probably get a lot of questions about pricing, be proactive and build a section on your site that answers money questions. What is the base price, what causes the price to go up, what causes it to go down, how much is required to hold a lot, is a deposit required when a contract is signed, and so on.

Here is what you can do:

- Create a page for each of your floor plans that includes base pricing and associated costs for optional modifications.
- Use pictures to compare your standard interior finishes to upgrades. Explain what makes them different and list the associated costs.
- Create a buying guide that maps out your home buying process from start to finish. Provide a timeline that shows milestones and when payment commitments need to be made.

These are just a few examples of how you can use your website in the sales process to help home buyers feel more confident in your processes and the decisions they are making along the way.

There are many benefits of enhancing your traditional sales strategies with digital age convenience. Builders that put off upgrading their website will fall behind those that are using modern tools to boost sales.

The recurring theme is convenience for the client. When they are ready to making a decision, they will want to talk with an inside sales rep. With the right digital sales and marketing program, people that contact you will already be “prequalified”, making the sale easier for your reps to close.

GETTING STARTED

Do you need help with your online sales and marketing program?

After reading through this ebook, you might start imagining how an online sales and marketing program can help your operations. For home builders and sales teams, it means a more streamlined business model. For potential home buyers, it means a lot more convenience.

It's never too late to start. Building a steady pipeline of quality leads will help assure ongoing business in the future. Creating a comprehensive online sales and marketing program makes this possible. And not only is the percentage of sales from online programs rivaling traditional methods, but in most cases, it's also more affordable.

If you're looking for a company to help you take your online sales and marketing to the next level, Diggles Creative has the knowledge and experience necessary to do just that. Call us at (970) 744-3611 or [send us an email](#) today and we can discuss what it will look like to create an online sales and marketing package for you.

Sources

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3. <https://www.consumeraffairs.com/housing/real-estate-websites/>
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ABOUT US

We believe everyone deserves to feel certain that their marketing dollars will deliver dependable growth for their business. Which is why, since 2001, we've been developing our strategic approach to marketing and design.

We help our customers with their online sales and marketing processes so growing their businesses is easier. We also help our customers with branding design so they will stand out from the competition, make a good first impression, and feel proud of the way their company looks.

Our clients include home builders, heavy construction companies, and real estate developers.

<https://www.digglescreative.com>

Strategic Marketing and Creative Design

Make growing your business easier with our proven approach to marketing and feel proud of the way your company looks.

