

3 Ways to Modernize Your Website

Blog piece written in 2015 targeting real estate agents who want to update their digital marketing game.

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What do you think when you stumble across a website that looks like it was created in 2005? You might not believe that an outdated website could influence your buying decisions, but just as we unconsciously judge people based on the clothes they wear, we *feel* good and bad design in our gut. Take a quick [look at these rudimentary websites](#) and note your involuntary emotional response as you gaze upon these eyesores.

Chances are, your website looks much better than those monstrosities, but there's always room for improvement. If you're thinking about updating your website anytime soon, consider bouncing the following ideas off your web designer. A talented designer can integrate these concepts into your overall vision, and these tips can serve as a springboard for a larger conversation about design and usability.

Go Beyond the Fold: Web designers once believed that you should feature all the important information for your business above “the fold”—that space where the text runs off the screen on a typical computer monitor and you're forced to scroll. However, that myth was debunked many years ago. Studies have repeatedly found that consumer actually *like* to scroll, especially if you give them a good reason to keep reading. Putting enticing content up front and making them work a little to read the rest is like handing them a beautifully wrapped gift. It piques their interest, and when they feel compelled to scroll, they'll feel a bit more actively engaged. It sounds counter-intuitive that someone would want to work to read our website, but it's a perfect example of what psychologists call “effort justification theory.” If you make them work for it, they'll often decide after the fact that it was worth the effort.

Here are just a few examples of highly successful, tech-savvy companies that tempt you to scroll beyond the fold: [Apple](#), [airbnb](#), [Lyft](#), [Starbucks](#), [Getaround](#), [Whole Foods](#)... the list goes on and on!

Hover Effects: A hover effect is a simple animation that brings an icon or menu option alive when you hover your mouse pointer over it. Before reading any further, go to [Humaan.com](#) and hover your pointer over the images at the bottom of the screen to see how emotionally satisfying this can be.

Beautiful, no? Rather than creating a link to their portfolio, this Australian marketing firm piques your curiosity with colorful imagery, and when you hover over the image you'll discover exactly what they've done for some of their best clients.

Focus on User Experience: User experience is an entire sub-field of web design, and while it may seem obvious that you're designing your website with consumers in mind, we sometimes forget this basic truth when our creative juices start flowing. In fact, there was a trend in the early 2000s where flash animations would dance across the screen. It was cool for about five seconds, but it quickly became annoying. Let's face it, we're all busy, and nobody is visiting your website because they want to marvel at how creative your designer can be (except maybe your designer's mom).

In the end, you want to strike a balance between interesting new trends and creating a website that gives your clients the information they need with a few simple clicks. For an excellent example of striking this balance, go back to Humaan.com and take a look at the menu items in the upper, right-hand corner of their homepage. "What We Do," "Our Work," and "About Us" are prominently featured in a simple, no-frills font. If their clients aren't in the mood to hover their mouse over the icons at the bottom, they can jump straight to the information they need.

Again, nothing is black and white when it comes to design, and these ideas are only a starting point. Instead of asking your designer to blindly apply all three concepts to your next website, mention these ideas and give him or her the freedom to create. Review highly ranked real estate websites (the [2015 Real Estate Website Rankings](#) from REALTRENDS is a good place to start), pass your favorites along to your designer for inspiration and direction, and collaborate to put your best digital foot forward.