

FAQ's

[1] What the heck is a Blog?

The term "Blog" is a contraction of the term "Web Log". It can be just text, or include pictures, audio and even video. It is basically your digital "Soapbox" to let the world know what you think.

[2] Why do I need a Blog?

Primarily because you are in sales and Blogging is the communications medium for the 21st Century. This is where the new generation is going to do their research and look for service providers. The next generation will spend much more time surfing the internet than browsing thru magazines. In the end, consider this yet another form of advertising.

[3] What is it going to cost me?

Anywhere from free to roughly \$150 per year in cash. The largest expense is going to be your time. You will want to keep a continuous flow of "stuff" appearing or people are going to lose interest quickly. The good news is you can borrow content from a lot of sources - the important part is only use what is relevant.

[4] How do people find me?

Search engines are the best source. Someone goes to Google and types in Real Estate, Kent, WA. If you are a real estate professional in Kent, you will want to be at the top of those search results. Potential clients look at the blogs, read the entries and see which agent has the most knowledge about the area they're servicing.

The other way people will find you is by following links from other blogs. A loan officer could have a link to your blog and their client follows the link because the loan officer is basically giving you a recommendation.

[5] How do I get started?

There are a wide range of places that offer users the ability to create blogs from Comcast to Microsoft. The "Big Three" vendors for serious blogging:

- Blogger – www.blogger.com
- TypePad – www.typepad.com
- WordPress – www.wordpress.com

All appear fairly user friendly, will lead you through the steps of setting up a blog, and offer a "professional" version that eliminates advertising from your blog. (free blog services often subsidize the cost by selling advertising space in the side columns of your blog)

[6] Should I get my own web address?

Generally the answer is to start with their address system and then, if things are going as you hope, kick it up to the next level. However this is a personal decision and one you'll want to give some thought to before making a decision. The primary difference is one has a blog address of "OrvilleSwartzRealty.typepad.com" while the other is a more typical address like "www.OrvilleSwartzRealty.com"

There are pros and cons to both addresses. If you buy a web address and stop blogging, it will include either outdated information or no information directly associated with you and your business. If you don't buy a web address and your blog takes off, you end up promoting an address that includes the name of your blogging service provider. You can always change over later...just be prepared that may be an involved process.

[7] How often do I need to blog?

Some people blog daily, others do it weekly. Most people feel that 2 or three times per week will keep them high on the search engines and provide the depth of content that clients are looking for. It's a good idea to make a publishing schedule. If you decide that you're going to publish your blog on Tuesdays and Fridays then mark your calendar so you don't forget!

[8] How long should a blog be?

Typically the posts are like diary entries and run one or two paragraphs. Most blogs don't contain enough riveting content that will keep a reader's attention for pages and pages. Keeping it short and sweet is best.

[9] Should I allow others to post comments on my blog?

This is a highly debated area. One point of view is that having a dialogue with your clients (as they remain mostly anonymous) is a great way to cement your reputation as an industry expert within your niche market. Another is that someone could say something you don't want associated with your name. And if it's posted to your blog, it may appear you agree with what was said. If you pull the comment off (and you can), then you run the risk of criticism for not letting others have their say.

Some blog service providers provide you, the blogmaster, with the ability to remove a comment once it's been posted. Others let you approve the comment *before* it's posted. Regardless of how you decide to use the commenting feature you will want to look at the way the blog service providers deal with comments before making your decision.

[10] Anything Else?

Yes, spell check, proof-read again and again. This is your marketing interface to your potential clients. Posts with bad grammar, miss-spelled words, etc. send the wrong message. Attention to detail will be noticed, appreciated and will have a much more positive outcome.

Avoid too much "Flair". There are a million plug-ins for blogs. Too much of anything is bad. Keep your blog looking professional, neat and clean. The result will always be better.