



The Houston Association of Realtors leverages Google Base for Real Estate to increase awareness locally and expand exposure for its listings beyond Houston.

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Bob Hale
President and CEO of HAR



ABOUT GOOGLE BASE FOR REAL ESTATE

Google Base is a free service that lets you make your listings easier for home-buyers and real estate agents to find when they look for properties via Google. Google Base broadens your distribution, providing free traffic and leads through natural search results on Google properties. Google Base is a better search experience for users because they can refine results based on specific attributes and see results on Google Maps, immediately zeroing in on the neighborhoods most attractive to them.

Approach

HAR takes an active approach to helping its thriving membership of Houston real estate professionals reach consumers and sell homes. An innovator in the real estate industry, HAR has a long history of using the latest technology to grow the Houston market, the 4th largest in the nation.

As part of its forward-thinking online marketing strategy, HAR not only offers access to its members' property listings through its top-ranking website, it also submits them to Google Base. Google Base is a free service that enables anyone to submit content, such as detailed descriptions of items or services, and then makes the listing easily discoverable by people using Google search services, including Google web search and Google Product Search.

“Our top priority is to help our members be more productive and profitable,” explains Bob Hale, President and CEO of HAR. “Google is the major destination for people to begin their search. We want to fish where the fish are.”

In addition to reaching more Houston consumers, HAR uses Google Base to expand exposure for its listings beyond Houston. “In many ways, we’re like a public utility in Houston – we’re where people go to find information about available properties,” says Robert Cook, HAR’s Chairman of the Board. “We also want to reach more people outside the Houston market, who may be relocating to Houston.”



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Result

HAR has so far submitted 62,000 listings to Google Base, and according to Hale, the initiative is already a success. The HAR website currently receives 1 billion hits and 900,000 unique visitors per month, and traffic continues to grow.

“Our metric for success is exposure. Google is the biggest search engine on the planet. We want to be where consumers are looking. Where they’re looking – that’s where you should be,” Hale explains. “Our advice has always been, ‘Get a public website, and promote, promote, promote.’”

Cook agrees. “We’re about innovation. Without a doubt, we’re progressive, and open to new ideas that will help our members,” he says. “I think we were the first to start working with Google. Now we’re starting to see some of our members use the fact that their listings will appear on Google to promote their business. People selling homes want to be on Google.”

According to Hale, not only are HAR's members happy with the results of the Google partnership, others in the industry are starting to recognize the value of working with Google to increase exposure to listings. "People in the industry understand what Google is doing, and they see that Google is a friend to the industry," he says.

Hale believes that HAR will see even more benefits as Google continues to improve surfacing of listing data in Google search results and refines the user interface to provide a better experience for consumers. "We know Google wants to make the experience first class for us, so we expect Google Base to deliver more value over time," he says. "At the end of the day, we expect it to be excellent."

