

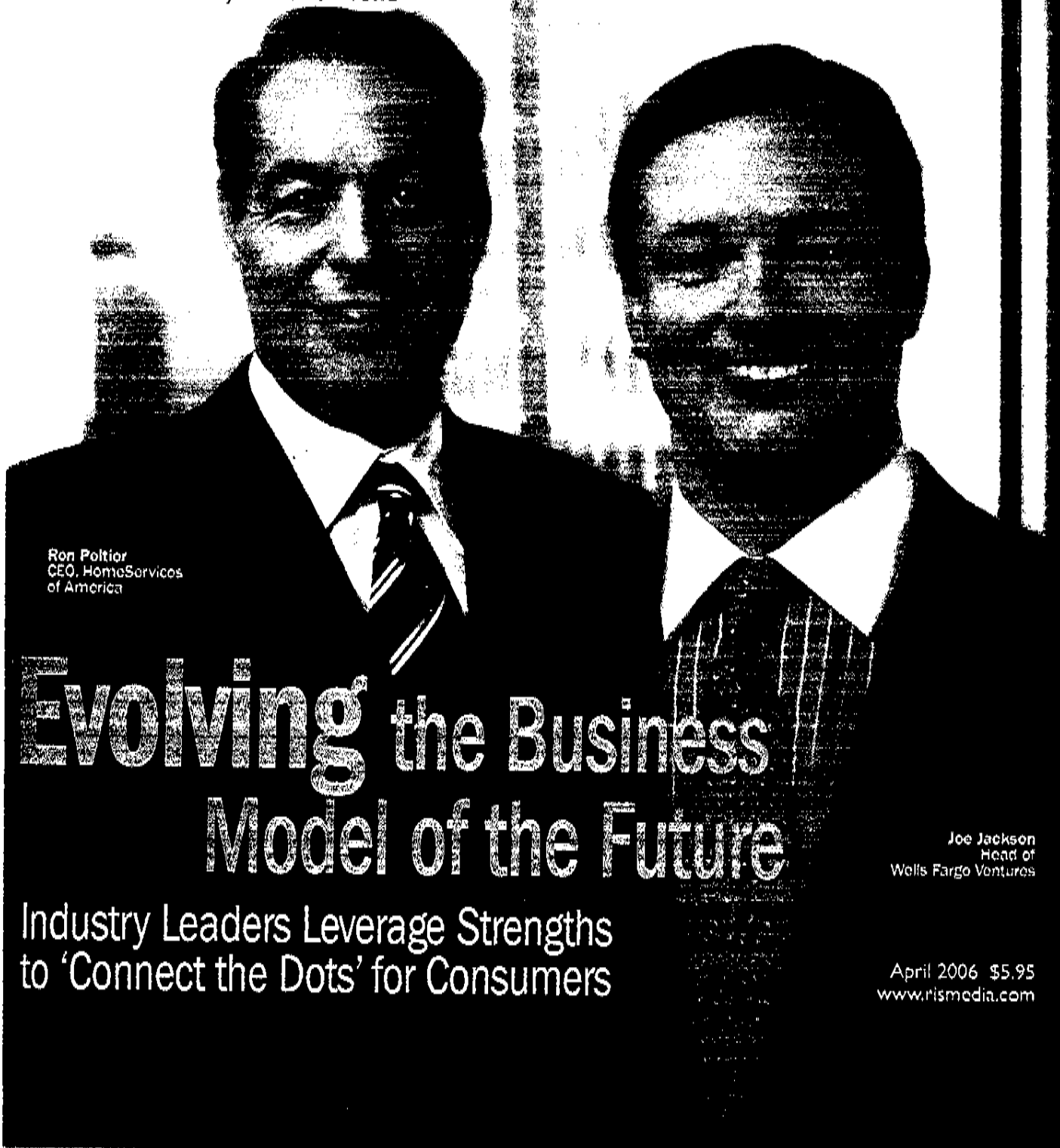


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TECHNOLOGY

In the movie, "Field of Dreams," the famous quote was, "If you build it, they will come."

The good news is, however, as the medium grows and matures, real estate professionals are coming up with increasingly innovative ways to maximize their Web presence and, in turn, market themselves for increased business.

A Work in Progress Comes of Age

One such Realtor is Pat Haddad, an agent with Indiana-based RE/MAX Preferred who has been perfecting her Web site, www.pathaddad.com, since 2001.

"At first I had this pretty little Web site that was doing me no good at all...then I decided that I was going to do whatever it took to make it work," says Haddad, who changed Web site providers and linked up with Anaheim, California-based Advanced Access and "followed everything my coach there told me to do.

"Your Web site is like a great big snowball," Haddad explains. "As you implement the changes that you're instructed to, over time, you will grow this amazing presence with tons of hits that result in all kinds of buyers and sellers."

According to Haddad, one of the most important things that Advanced Access taught her to do was to "get found by the likes of Google and Yahoo. The name of the game is getting found by search engines."

Haddad says she works tirelessly to make sure that the so-called "spiders" or "crawlers" that search engines send out find her site. She accomplishes this through a number of methods. Reciprocal linking, however—or finding other like Realtors to attach to and adding content—makes her site more relevant and likely to be spotted by search

engines. She adds that it is also key to appear on the first page of any Google or Yahoo search. "You don't want to be in the sponsored links, you want to be on the left side where people are most likely to click."

To be picked up by the big search engines costs money, Haddad explains, adding that she spent close to \$10,000 on her site in 2005. She claims this was a small price to pay for her Web site—her "bread and butter."

"The name of the game is getting found by search engines."

"My Web site accounts for most of my business, and last year I did 57 transactions and was the No. 16 top salesperson in all of Indiana for RE/MAX," says Haddad. "If you think of it, just two transactions and my entire Web site is paid for."

Haddad credits her Web success to constantly working on her site with the help she gets from Advanced Access. She explains that when she

was first trying to build up her Web presence, the Advanced Access forums were invaluable, providing her with a place to go to consult with other Realtors who had also learned ways of maximizing their sites and were always willing to give new insights.

Building a Relocation Business

In fact, Haddad shared information that helped build the Web business of Lauren Whittaker, a Keller Williams agent in Marietta, Georgia who also says she has built up a thriving relocation business through her Web site in just four years.

"I was transferred seven times in 12 years in six states," says Whittaker. This is the first thing you find out about her when you visit her site, www.soldbylauren.com. She says people can relate to her because she has had to relocate herself so many times; they trust her to help them move to a new city.

Before anyone can find you, Whittaker stresses, "You have to really have a creative Web site with all kinds of unique content so that crawlers from the big search engines find you."

She credits Advanced Access for teaching her how to make her content unique and for pushing her to keep increasing her pages. "When I first started out I didn't know anything at all about Web sites and Advanced Access taught me so much. They gave me a very beefy Web site and then they taught me how to really customize it," Whittaker says.

Advanced Access, says Whittaker, taught her to, "think of the Internet as a porcupine and your Web site as the quills. Every page is a quill, so if you never tweak it or change it, you don't get 'crawled,' or picked up by the search engines. So you have to

keep adding unique quills to build up your ranking with the Web search engines. If you continue to add innovative content, before you know it, you will pop up on the first page of any big search engine...and that means new customers, either buyers or sellers."

Whittaker reports that she also pays people on a yearly basis to enhance her site with search engine optimization. Currently, she reports that her Web site has grown so quickly that it accounts for 75% of her business.

Newbie Finds Web Success

Mike Hamby, a former professional chef in Annapolis, Maryland, decided to become a Realtor 11 months ago and immediately found success using a Web site built by Advanced Access.

"If you plug Annapolis into any of the big search engines, I am on the first page with my Web site, www.CallMike.org." While Hamby says he works on his site at least an hour a day, and in the beginning probably closer to four hours a day, building content and refining his site, he says Advanced Access "really gave me amazing tools to maximize my site."

Because of his Web site, Hamby says in his first year as a Realtor with Champion Realty he was acknowledged as a Top Producer and The Top First Year Agent out of some 570 agents, ranking 49th in total earnings.

"I depend a great deal on Advanced Access to make sure I get linked and to drive traffic to my site," he says. "And they have helped me out tremendously. One thing about Advanced Access is their service. I can e-mail and call tech support if I have any questions about anything and they always get back with me and help out and this has just made my life a whole lot easier."

Hamby says that aside from the customers he has been able to cultivate from his site, his Web presence also makes his job "a whole lot easier. I tell people I am working with to go to my site and check out these listings and they can narrow down considerably how many houses I have to show them. It makes my life easier and it makes their lives easier. No one wants to go see 150 houses if we can accomplish the same thing using the Internet and then only have to see, say, 21 houses to find that dream home."

Hamby says his wife gave him one month to prove that he could make it as a Realtor. He has certainly proved his point having done over \$10 million in sales and listings in his first year in the business. He says with Advanced Access and the work he puts into his Web site, "the sky is the limit." **RE**

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