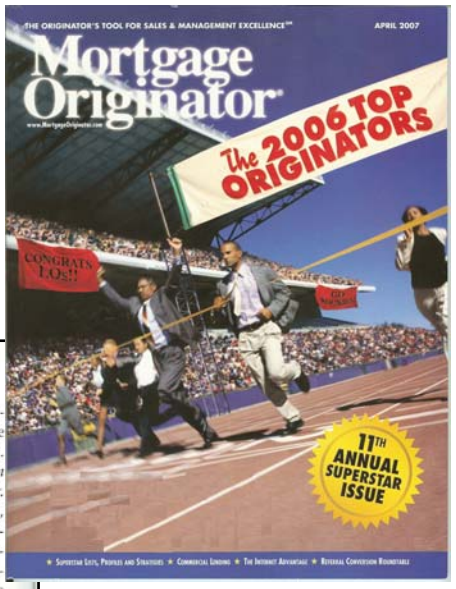

Taking Advantage of the Internet

By Chip Cummings, CMC

In the 24 years that I've been in the mortgage lending business, almost everything has changed. I go back to the days of hand-calculated APRs, the no "White Out" rule on hand-typed 1003s, and remember nervously waiting hours for approvals while outside an underwriter's door.

Thank goodness those days are long gone, but many originators are still slow to accept change, and risk losing their business because of it. For whatever reason, many LO's simply don't take advantage of the variety of Internet options available to them. Obviously, the Internet offers a wide range of possibilities, from the "instant" Fannie/Freddie approvals and doc prep to AVM's and instant pricing. Those are a given, but what about marketing? Do you know how to really reach your prospects in this new age? With so many choices out there, are you making the most of the opportunities the Internet offers? Most originators aren't, so that will be the primary focus of this article.

Web sites

There are many types of Web sites, but they all fall into three basic categories—informational, operational and marketing. Sites developed for marketing purposes include "stealth" sites, mini-site networks, blogs and community sites. All of these are designed to drive traffic to your main site (creating customers), or to drive them into a drip marketing campaign (as prospects).

Stealth sites are nothing more than one-page Web sites, designed to deliver information (personal value), in exchange for the prospect's name and e-mail address (at a minimum). Called permission-based marketing, this is how the majority of online leads are generated—many that are being sold to you right now. By having your own stealth site, at least you can generate your own leads, and have the exclusive rights to them!

Stealth sites are not about you or your company, but are constructed around three or four targeted "keyword phrases" for maximum impact and exposure through search engines and PPC (pay-per-click) advertising. For example, if you are targeting first-time homebuyers, you could develop pages to highlight renters, wedding dresses or baby showers—all demographically related categories for people possibly in the market for their first home.

Mini-site networks extend the reach of stealth sites, by creating a

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Go with trusted sources (such as those found through Encompass' eP-

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Did you see the video of the "Bride's Haircut" all over the place? So did millions of other people! Thanks to fast-moving technology, it has gotten really easy to add audio and video to your Internet marketing arsenal. With the advent of You Tube, Google

Chip has published numerous articles for magazines and newspapers…

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