

A comparison of Online Estate Agents' websites

By The Big Property List

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Acknowledgements

This report is inspired by a great blog series [comparing commercial property websites](#) written and published by Neil Osmond at [The Technology Studio](#). Neil's methodology was to compare various metrics to compare the websites of commercial property surveyors and commercial property portals.

Methodology

The main tool here is [websitegrader.com](#) (WG), an automated analytical tool to give an overall measure of a website, taking into account popularity, features, structure and SEO metrics such as headers and alt text. The tool is flawed, as are many of the measures it uses – such as Alexa for website traffic.

But we have had to work with the information available in the public domain and the sum of all these measures combined with a bit of gut feel can give a pretty interesting picture.

We have divided the metrics into a set that will interest the industry – i.e. the online estate agents themselves, web developers and SEOers; and a set that will interest the consumer – i.e. which online estate agent should you use! This report primarily compares websites, not service.

Results - Industry metrics

League Table by WebsiteGrader (WG) score

Company	Website Address	WG	Page Rank	Alexa Rank UK*	Google index pages	Back Links (Google)
The Little House Company	www.thelittlehousecompany.co.uk	98	3	26148	5500	57
My Property for Sale	www.mypropertyforsale.co.uk	98	3	20943	2920	11
Half a Percent	www.halfapercent.com	97	4	87355	1610	22
121 Move	www.121move.co.uk	95	3	150334	893	5
House Revolution	www.houserevolution.com	94	0	1700000 (G)	287	5
House Network	www.housenetwork.co.uk	93	3	13759	284	14
Turtle Homes	www.turtlehomes.co.uk	91	3	4200000 (G)	168	6
Net Movers	www.netmovers.co.uk	90	4	39066	11700	31
iSold	www.isold.com/	90	3	18896	825	10
Hatched	www.hatched.co.uk	89	3	1200000	905	6
eMoov	www.emoov.co.uk/	89	2	86462	489	19
Jane Earl Estate Agents	www.janeearl.co.uk/	87	2	180798	120	1
House Simple	www.housesimple.co.uk/	85	4	39176	173	11
Open House	www.onlineestateagents.org.uk	84	0	N/A	328	14
Move4Us	www.move4us.co.uk	83	0	4800000 (G)	453	2
Home Sale Online	www.homesaleonline.co.uk	81	2	6100000 (G)	33	7
One London Property	www.onelondonproperty.com	79	1	5200000 (G)	230	2
Move and Save	www.moveandsave.co.uk	77	3	4900000 (G)	1080	2
Pink Residential	www.pinkresidential.co.uk	60	0	14700000 (G)	43	0
House Tree	www.housetree.co.uk	55	0	12800000 (G)	43	3
@Home	www.thelowcostway.co.uk/	46	3	N/A	685	1
Market my House	www.mmhuk.com	14	0	N/A	2	0

* See notes section at the back of the report for further annotations and explanation of metrics

Comments

When ranked by Website Grader (WG) score, the top two [online Estate Agents](#) are former For Sale by Owner (FSBO) websites that have recently become online estate agents in 2010. As such, their establishment date of 2010 is misleading and their position indicates they have built comprehensive websites whilst acting as FSBOs.

League Table by Alexa Rank (indicator of Website Traffic)

Company	Website Address	WG	Page Rank	Alexa Rank UK*
House Network	www.housenetwork.co.uk	93	3	13759
iSold	www.isold.com/	90	3	18896
My Property for Sale	www.mypropertyforsale.co.uk	98	3	20943
The Little House Company	www.thelittlehousecompany.co.uk	98	3	26148
Net Movers	www.netmovers.co.uk	90	4	39066
House Simple	www.housesimple.co.uk/	85	4	39176
eMoov	www.emoov.co.uk/	89	2	86462
Half a Percent	www.halfapercent.com	97	4	87355
121 Move	www.121move.co.uk	95	3	150334
Jane Earl Estate Agents	www.janeearl.co.uk/	87	2	180798
Hatched	www.hatched.co.uk	89	3	1200000
House Revolution	www.houserevolution.com	94	0	1700000 (G)
Turtle Homes	www.turtlehomes.co.uk	91	3	4200000 (G)
Move4Us	www.move4us.co.uk	83	0	4800000 (G)
Move and Save	www.moveandsave.co.uk	77	3	4900000 (G)
One London Property	www.onelondonproperty.com	79	1	5200000 (G)
Home Sale Online	www.homesaleonline.co.uk	81	2	6100000 (G)
House Tree	www.housetree.co.uk	55	0	12800000 (G)
Pink Residential	www.pinkresidential.co.uk	60	0	14700000 (G)
Open House	www.onlineestateagents.org.uk	84	0	N/A
@Home	www.thelowcostway.co.uk/	46	3	N/A
Market my House	www.mmhuk.com	14	0	N/A

* Alexa Rank (G) indicates Global rank where UK rank unavailable (normally means not enough data)

** See notes section at the back of the report for further annotations and explanation of metrics

Comments

We would expect established online estate agents such as House Network (since 2005) Netmovers (2004) and Halfapercent (1999) to be high in the traffic ranks, which they are. Surprisingly iSold.com, the Tesco Spicerhaart joint venture are #2 in the Alexa rank indicating high levels of website traffic. The two ex-FSBO

websites My Property for Sale and The Little House Company occupy positions 3 and 4 – this could be because over the last 5 years they have had a business model where they could not rely on leads from 3rd party portals such as Rightmove and have had to develop strong strategies for driving visitors to their own websites. This contrasts with other Online Estate Agents (Online EAs) who may use their own website only to sign-up sellers (onsite marketing) but mainly market their properties to buyers using the national property portals (offsite marketing).

There is an opportunity here – how important is it for Online EAs to drive traffic to their own websites when they can use national portals such as Primelocation, Zoopla, Rightmove and Findaproperty to generate their leads and show off their properties? **This could be a point of differentiation between Online EAs.**

League Table by Number of pages indexed by Google

Company	Website Address	WG	Page Rank	Alexa Rank UK*	Google index pages
Net Movers	www.netmovers.co.uk	90	4	39066	11700
The Little House Company	www.thelittlehousecompany.co.uk	98	3	26148	5500
My Property for Sale	www.mypropertyforsale.co.uk	98	3	20943	2920
Half a Percent	www.halfapercent.com	97	4	87355	1610
Move and Save	www.moveandsave.co.uk	77	3	4900000 (G)	1080
Hatched	www.hatched.co.uk	89	3	1200000	905
121 Move	www.121move.co.uk	95	3	150334	893
iSold	www.isold.com/	90	3	18896	825
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Move4Us	www.move4us.co.uk	83	0	4800000 (G)	453
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Comments

Unsurprisingly the newer sites and those with fewest clients (client data hidden in this table) have less indexed pages. Indexing by Google can be an indicator of the size of a website, the quality of the content, and the structure of the website pages. Indexing is a pre-requisite to online ‘findability’ in our view.

The Online EAs' websites with the most indexed pages are also the most established, with most clients. It is notable again that the two ex-FSBO sites rank highly in this table(#2 and #3) – most likely due to the much higher levels of property adverts (boosted by free and low cost FSBO listings and publishing other estate agents' listings alongside their own). Perhaps also the ex-FSBO sites have published more written content such as articles, news and guides to supplement their pages of property adverts. Content is king.

Consumer metrics – (sorted by WG score)

Company	Website Address	Year		Clients (No.)	Partic ulars	Valua tions	Viewin gs	Neg	NAEA/ OMB
		Est.	Cost**						
The Little House Company	www.thelittlehousecompany.co.uk	2010	£425+VAT	?	Y	Y	Y	?	N/Y
My Property for Sale	www.mypropertyforsale.co.uk	2010	£299+VAT	?	Y	?	?	?	N/Y
Half a Percent	www.halfapercent.com	1999	£199+VAT + 0.5%	60	Y	?	Y + 0.5%	?	Y/Y
121 Move	www.121move.co.uk	2008	£295+VAT	350	Y	Y	N	Y	Y/Y
House Revolution	www.houserevolution.com	2006	£999+VAT	200	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y/Y
House Network	www.housenetwork.co.uk	2005	£395+VAT		Y	N	?	?	Y/Y
Turtle Homes	www.turtlehomes.co.uk	1998	£750+VAT	210	Y	Y	N	N	N/Y
Net Movers	www.netmovers.co.uk	2004	£199 inc		N	N	N	N	N/Y
iSold	www.isold.com/	2010	£999 inc	245	Y	Y	N	Y	N/Y
Hatched	www.hatched.co.uk	2005	£199+VAT + £199	605	Y	Y	N	Y	Y/Y
eMoov	www.emoov.co.uk/	2010	£349+VAT	9	Y	Y	N	Y	N/Y
Jane Earl Estate Agents	www.janeearl.co.uk/	2006	£285	81	Y	N	N	Y	N/Y
House Simple	www.housesimple.co.uk/	2006	£395+VAT	550	Y	N	N	Y	N/Y
Open House	www.onlineestateagents.org.uk	2009	395	115	Y	Y	N	?	N/Y
Move4Us	www.move4us.co.uk	2010	£385+VAT	138	Y	N	N	Y	Y/Y
Home Sale Online	www.homesaleonline.co.uk	?	295	123	N	N	N	N	?
One London Property	www.onelondonproperty.com	2009	£249 + 999 + VAT	7	Y	Y	N	?	N/Y
Move and Save	www.moveandsave.co.uk	2004	£275+VAT	1328	Y	Y	Y	Y	N/Y
Pink Residential	www.pinkresidential.co.uk	2010	£355+VAT	60	Y	Y	N	Y	Y/Y
House Tree	www.housetree.co.uk	?	£399+VAT	7	Y	Y	N	Y	N/Y
@Home	www.thelowcostway.co.uk/		£295+VAT	134	Y	Y	?	?	?
Market my House	www.mmhuk.com	?	£300+VAT	0	Y	Y	N	N	N/Y

Comments

Consumers may be interested in the results of the 'industry' league tables – i.e. which is the 'biggest' online estate agent with the 'best' website. Such things as the WebsiteGrader score and number of clients are indicators of this but probably not relevant directly to their choice when selecting an online estate agent.

The above table demonstrates other metrics that may interest consumers such as the price and the elements of services offered – as well as how established the company is.

It's important to note that this is desk based research only and does not necessarily reflect the levels of service offered by the online estate agent – only the details of their service.

In this report the costs are a guide only and actually can be quite complicated, much like comparing mobile phone tariffs, as some will include a For Sale board, some won't, and some charge for some services such as valuations separately. In general we have selected the lowest fixed fee offer that generally compares with the services offered by the rest – i.e. includes where available a floor plan and photos.

General Observations

- 'Online estate agents' don't usually undertake viewings
- Desktop or report based valuations often replace a visit, there is an emphasis on sellers setting the price themselves. (some advise getting quotes from local agents!)
- Most online estate agents are members of the Industry Ombudsman scheme but not the National Association of Estate Agents (NAEA)
- It is not always clear on their websites what is included and what the seller is expected to do – especially negotiations once an offer is received.
- Many Online Estate Agents' websites are not very 'findable' from search engines and are not well optimised for Search Engines (SEO) – we assume this is because they rely on portals such as Rightmove to market their properties.
- Given the above, online estate agents commonly use Pay Per Click to attract new sellers as their websites do not always attract organic search traffic.
- There are four subsets of online Estate Agent:
 - o Ex- For Sale By Owner Websites
 - o Ex-HIP providers/ EPC providers
 - o Ex-Traditional Estate Agents
 - o Traditional Estate Agents trading online as a different brand
- It is very difficult to compare price like for like, but the general range is £295 to £1000 as a fixed fee or with a component of commission. This could be subject of further study.
- There are few 'Traditional' High street agents working in this space.
- Online EAs generally have less restrictive contracts with their clients – i.e. no sole selling/ agency clauses or minimum term and sometimes no contract at all!

Recommendations

1. NAEA should work to encourage Online Estate Agents to join the professional body.
2. Some Online Estate Agents need to be clearer in describing their services on their websites and should look at opportunities to optimise their websites for organic search to reduce reliance on Pay per Click, reduce reliance on portals and differentiate their website.
3. Consumers should consider what they want from an online estate agent and what they are willing to do themselves before comparing price as some services are charged as add-ons.
4. Very few Online Estate Agents seem to have a local representative but some are stronger in a particular geographical area (i.e. halfapercet.com in London and Move and Save in Nottinghamshire).

Should you wish to discuss the contents of this report, make a correction or additional, or talk about how you can improve your presence online please email james@thebigpropertylist.co.uk

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Footnotes

1. The 'Design' metric we added as our own arbitrary judgement of the website look, feel and design – it's totally subjective but turned out to reflect quite closely some of the other metrics!
2. Alexa Rank (G) indicates Global rank where UK rank unavailable (normally means not enough data/ traffic)
3. Cost is hard to compare due to differing fee structures - generally lowest fixed fee option is shown
4. Particulars - in general this means floor plan and photos taken by a representative of the agent - most made these available as printable particulars
5. NAEA = member of National Association of Estate Agents, OMB means a member of industry Ombudsman scheme
6. All data correct as at 19th October 2010
7. The Big Property List has a relationship with Move4Us an online Estate Agent featured in this report – however this report has been prepared with absolute impartiality.