

A free customer-service strategy that builds business



BY ERIC CAWLEY

Real estate agents are increasingly adopting an innovative new marketing tool that other business owners can and should adopt.

Here's the scenario: An agent's website

visitor is greeted by a chat box on the bottom right of the screen. It says, "Hi, I'm Laurie! Are you interested in buying or selling a home today?" At the same time, the agent's computer sounds a chime, notifying the agent that the site has a visitor.

Just as in a real store, a conversation can begin, with the sales process fully in play.

Real estate agents understand what many

business owners do not: Many websites unintentionally turn away potential clients by lacking direct, real-time, human interaction.

That's a problem, because studies have shown that:

- Between 26 percent and 70 percent of those who arrive on a site will leave without visiting a second page [the "bounce rate"].

- 55 percent of visitors spend fewer than

15 seconds on a site.

- 83 percent of those visiting a website need some kind of customer support when making an online purchase.

- 44 percent of online consumers say that having their questions answered by someone in real time, while making an online purchase, is an important feature.

- 38 percent of respondents say they made a purchase because of a chat session.

- 63 percent of web-

site visitors say they are more likely to return to a website with live-chat capabilities.

- 55 percent abandon an online transaction if their questions or concerns are not addressed quickly.

Free, customizable chat widgets enable you to initiate and conduct a conversation with customers. You can answer questions, assuage concerns and encourage purchases. If you're away from a computer, customers can submit a question, which can then be sent to your email for rapid response.

Online chat can also accelerate your ability

to achieve several business goals, including improved conversions, higher purchase rates, reduced cart abandonment and heightened customer satisfaction.

Live chat redefines effective online customer communication. It surpasses the responsiveness of email and phone support by providing the immediate support that customers need, exactly when they need it, in a familiar, convenient and secure way.

Eric Cawley is president of Complete Marketing Solutions, Meridian. eric@completemarketing.us; 440-6754