5 Steps to a KILLER Commercial Real Estate Lead Generating Website

CM CALICO MARKETING
Commercial Real Estate Websites

Have you noticed that sales letters are being thrown away in favor of emails, e-newsletters, social media, SEO and other internet marketing strategies? It's a simple concept: **internet marketing is cheaper, and just as – if not more – effective than the old ways**. No idea how to get started? **I'm going to break down commercial real estate internet marketing in a no-BS way.**

1. Website: Make it Sell

The last thing you want is to spend thousands of dollars on a website that just sits there looking pretty. If you want to gain internet leads, you're going to need a lot more than a contact form. Multiple points of contact with – preferably – a few different pieces of information to exchange for visitor data works best. Everything on your website should be focused on getting people to download your "free PDF" and sign up for your newsletter.

I like to place this information at the bottom of each major page: Home, Services, About Us. I also like to advertise it on the sidebar of the blog. A blog is a major entry point. On average, about 50% of website traffic originates from blog articles. Don't miss an opportunity to snag leads from this important resource.

If you want a website with powerful lead generation, consider a pop-up or slide screen that will automatically show "Five Tips to Selling your Commercial Property – Click here for Free PDF'" to new visitors. Even if they hit 'no thank you' they will be aware the PDF exists.

Multiple Lead Gen Points Work the Best!

EBook. A piece of content that is highly interesting to your target market, e.g., "Five Tips to Selling your Commercial Property". This is not a sales piece – it's informative and educational. No one likes being sold to, but everyone likes getting helpful hints and tricks from an expert. You can put your sales information at the bottom of the last page.

Market Report. If your company creates monthly or quarterly market reports, these can be used as a great lead-generating tool. Reports are also a great resource to add to your newsletters and social media strategies.

Video / Podcasting. Do you make videos or podcasts? Have a few exclusive episodes that visitors to fill out their information before they are allowed into your "exclusive" vault.

Listing Brochures. If you decide to show listings on your website, a successful strategy can be to require contact details before visitors can download a property brochure. This is a personal preference – some brokers prefer to avoid requesting information that might impede property turnaround.

Free Valuation. While it can be helpful, most customers assume that consultations, valuations, and similar services are free and included in your usual services. Offering a consultation is not a good "call-to-action". Use these sparingly.

EBooks: Why we Do it.

Trust building is the unchallenged, absolute key for sales. Imagine your potential client searching the web for someone who can help. Joe has a mix of office and retail buildings, and he would like to cash-out before retirement. He's looking for someone in his area who has the expertise to sell his properties quickly and for top-dollar. He sorts through tons of websites, each promising the same thing: "We are the experts in selling...blah blah blah…". Suddenly, Joe stumbles upon your website. There's a free download available called "Five Tips to Selling your Commercial Property". Joe needs tips, so he fills out the form and starts reading. When he's finished, there is no question in his mind that you have the skills and expertise to handle this job. A website alone shows you're a commercial broker, but an eBook proves your expertise. Most of the time, a potential client has already made up his mind to hire you before the phone calls begin.

2. Website: Make it Follow Up

Any marketing efforts can be wasted without a solid follow-up system. What if Joe is ready to call you six months down the line but realizes he lost his PDF? Make it easy for Joe to find you.

Integrate into an Email System

Don't store your customer lead information for 'someday' – let's email them NOW! Did you know 70% of people expect a response within four hours? Let's not disappoint them. It's easy with automation tools.

Schedule your first email, "Thank you for downloading X", to send right away. I like to send a new email every three days in only three instances. Each email is full of articles and information that your target market will find helpful. I leave the salesy service descriptions at the bottom and fill the top of the email with 100% unique and relevant content.

After your initial follow-up, set this list to receive a monthly newsletter. Staying top-of-mind is key in this crazy, information-inundated world!

Newsletter

Some potential clients need a little more time. Maybe they're not ready to sell YET, but they're doing a bit of research before they pull the trigger in six months' time. For that, we need to stick around! A monthly newsletter is a great way to keep in touch. Just like the follow-up emails, we need to keep the content relevant and interesting to your target market. Sure, a report on the five largest office buildings may sound like an awesome read to you, but your retail niche isn't interested. Keep your target market in mind when producing the newsletter. Stay away from salesy content at the top. Instead, give them real, honest advice, or news that they will find interesting.

Another fascinating point: 66% of all emails in the United States are opened and read on smartphones or tablets. Ensure your newsletters and email marketing efforts are always mobile-friendly.

Tracking Software

Tracking your visitors can be done with Google Analytics, but thanks to privacy laws you can't track individual users by name. Easily bypass this issue with handy tracking software that can be effortlessly added to your website.

As soon as a visitor fills out a form to download one of your lead-generating pieces, they'll be tracked! See exactly what pages they viewed, for how long, and what they downloaded. When you go to follow-up with a personal email or phone call, you will know what pages they've visited, and therefore you can theorize about what subjects they will find interesting, or which services they will need.

3. Website: Help Google Find It

Now that we've done everything we can to convert website visitors into leads, let's drive traffic to our awesome lead-machine.

Blogging

Fifty percent of your website traffic will easily be generated directly from blog articles. If you have a website and you're wondering why you only get 150 hits a day, know that by adding a regularly updated blog, you could – in theory – get 300 a day. Why the heck is that? Three words: Long Keyword Strings.

What are long keyword strings? You probably want your website to rank #1 for 'Commercial Real Estate Dallas'. Indeed, that would be great, but reality isn't kind. The more common a keyword string is, the more competitive it will be. At this level, you're competing against giants like LoopNet. Instead of whipping out your credit card and buying up Google Adwords, think outside of the box. For example, 'Retail Space for Lease Dallas' gets up to **10 million searches per month**, yet only **1 or 2 commercial real estate firms rank** for this string. 'Warehouse for Lease Dallas' gets up to **1 million searches per month** – same thing! Low-hanging fruit is just waiting to be picked.

How do I capitalize on long keyword strings? Make a list of keyword strings you want to rank for. If you need ideas, use Google's **Keyword Planner**. Try typing in different strings to see the number of times it has been searched for per month. With this information, create blog posts to capitalize on those keywords.

Some Ideas include:
- Ten Surefire Ways to Find Retail Space for Lease in Dallas
- Fifteen Things you Need to Know Before Leasing Retail Space in Dallas
- Five Essential Tips on Finding Retail Space for Lease in Dallas

Post one of these babies a week and you'll be OWNING the internet!

Backlinks
A backlink is created when another website has a link to yours. For instance, if you did a guest blog on The Broker List, you would have one backlink. I won't go into the nitty-gritty of how Google calculates these, but backlinks from credible and industry-related websites will increase your website's ranking. Why? Because Google believes that if websites are linked to yours, you must have quality content worth viewing.

However, there is an evil side to backlinking: it matters where your backlinks are posted. When you're paying someone for a pack of # backlinks, be careful. This is usually done with spam bots which will lower your Google rankings. To get good quality backlinks, consider posting comments on blog posts with your website address, writing guest blogs, sending press releases, and purchasing advertising space on industry websites.

Social media is a great place to start! Ensure all your social media platforms are linked to your .com for maximum exposure. Also, be sure to include your social media links on your website – the more interconnected you are, the better.

Optimization
Here's a can of worms you definitely should open. Google wants to read your website, but cannot understand the content unless you have proper meta tags and titling. OK, I can tell that your eyes glazed over, but stay with me! Easy SEO plugins will do most of the work for you, but you do need to sit down and type in each page's title and description. For instance, your 'Selling Services' page will have a title like, 'Selling commercial property in Dallas, Texas', and an example description might be, 'Dallas, Texas experts in selling your commercial real estate property. Maximize your commercial portfolio'. Remember the long keyword strings? We're also trying to hit some keywords here: Selling Commercial Property Dallas Texas.

Consider adding the same keyword string to the page's header, and again within the first two sentences of your descriptive paragraph. This will ensure Google knows that the page is what it claims to be.

I could go on about URLs, category labeling, site maps, robots.txt, etc., but if you create meta tags (with a program like Yoast SEO), and write the header texts as suggested, you'll be above and beyond 99% of other commercial real estate websites.

Speed
Google officially started using a website's loading speed (i.e., the time it takes to load your website on a desktop or mobile device) as a ranking factor in 2010, but didn't seem to enforce it until about 2016. This can be a difficult thing to master, especially if you're using a cool template with lots of animations, video, and easy back-end editing tools. All those little upgrades that make your website extra special will bog down the load time. However, there are a few things you can do to speed up a bloated website.

Images
Save all your images in a compressed JPG format to compress the size as much as possible. Yes, some images may seem a little pixelated, but no website visitor does more than glance at a photo. Nit-picking over slightly blurry backgrounds will deliver poor speed results.

Video
If you have a lot of video, consider streaming instead of embedding. What's the difference?

> Embedded video is uploaded onto your hosting server so that you can play it on your website. Videos that are embedded will drastically increase your load time. If you have embedded videos, ensure they are saved as 'web quality' – there's no need for HD on a website! My rule of thumb is to have no more than one embedded video per website. One embedded video makes a great intro, or a cool slider, but you should stream everything else.

> Streaming video comes from a host service like YouTube or Vimeo. The heavy loading comes from the host service's servers, not yours. If you have a full video marketing strategy, it's imperative to utilize a streaming service.

Javascripts: If you're running a template with easy-to-use backend software, this is likely to be the cause of your loading woes. However, improving this aspect of your loading speed is not for the faint of heart. To make these changes and compress javascripts, contact a programmer. A good one. Second-rate swindlers will make some changes that will promptly be erased during the next WordPress or theme update. Ensure you're working with a true expert and not a random internet barracuda.

Hosting: If you're on the $5 a month GoDaddy plan and complaining about a 15-second load speed, you're the cause of your own pain – especially if you're running a WordPress template. Smaller hosting plans are known to throttle websites that pull too many resources, slowing them down on purpose. If you started out with fast load times and they have become slower over time, your hosting plan is likely to blame.

SSL

It's likely you've heard of an SSL, but no one has explained the details. A website that has an active SSL will display a little green padlock on your browser labeled 'Secure'. A Secure Sockets Layer (SSL) is used to secure data transmitted over the internet between your computer and the server. In layman's terms, if you're filling out forms or logging onto a website without the green padlock, hackers can see that information. Google began giving higher rankings to websites that use an active SSL. A company who provides this extra detail proves that they care about their website visitors.

4. Increasing Trust

The most powerful lead-generating machine, even when backed with remarkable Google rankings, can only provide you with a lead, not a sale. Let's talk about getting those leads to trust you before they reach for the phone. **The goal is to get your lead hopeful and excited about becoming your next client <u>before</u> your sales process begins.** Impossible? Nah!

EBook
I know I sound like a broken record with eBooks, but seriously, it's important. The goal of an eBook is to prove your expertise. What information would be useful to your target market? Write down everything you know about the topic. Most leads, after reading an eBook, are already sold on your services. It's just a matter of hammering out the details.

Blog
Blog posts aren't just useful for winning the keyword game, they're also excellent trust-builders. Consistent posts and articles that are relevant to your target market will keep you top-of-mind. You can also advertise these blog posts in newsletters, on social media, and via other advertising objectives.

Social Media

Long live the trust king! We're living in a world dominated by Zuckerberg and Twitter, so we need to suck it up and get on board. You're probably saying, "Social media isn't a big deal in commercial real estate!" HA! Let's look at some facts.

78% of consumers said that companies' social media posts affect their purchases.
74% of consumers rely on social media to make a buying decision.
83% of consumers are influenced by positive reviews.

Why the heck are those numbers so high?!

Emotions: What's the point of owning a $600 iPhone when an LG has similar features? We feel good about the product and its purchase. Having an iPhone and a Mercedes makes us feel good about ourselves, and gives a bit of value to our identities. People buy with their emotions and use logical reasoning to back up their feelings. You know what medium is dripping with emotional outbursts? Social media.

Suspicions: As someone who lives and breathes sales, you understand that it's rough to convince people to buy. Social media is very effective, especially when they see their neighbors, colleagues, and competitors becoming clients and closing deals. It's because they are influenced by others whom they perceive to be trustworthy or knowledgeable.

Numbers: In general, human beings have a crowd mentality – this is why social media has become such a marketing powerhouse. People will largely be convinced to make a buying decision if their peers have already done so. All you need to do is demonstrate how the same product has benefited their peers and colleagues.

Relevancy

When you're posting on social media channels, ensure relevancy. It might be fun to post a photo of you at the Cheesecake Factory saying, "Salted caramel cheesecake – totally stoked!", but leave those posts as a once-in-a-while bit of fun. Instead, focus on relevant articles, your opinions on news stories, and other topics that would interest your target market.

Follow and Share from your Target Market

Is there a business or client you're dying to land? Follow their social media streams and retweet, like, and comment on their posts. Just like dating, play it cool. No one likes a stalker, but everyone likes to be noticed and appreciated. A little bit of attention will go a long way towards finally landing that whale!

Advertise your Blog Posts

Remember how blog posts will bring in 50% of your online traffic? Advertising those articles can increase that number!

Advertise your EBooks

You'll probably only have one or two eBooks, so when advertising them, space out your ads to maybe once a month or bi-monthly. A new headline and photo can keep even avid followers from noticing that you're advertising the same thing over and over. Note: there is no need to change your eBook, just the advertisement.

Video Sells

Video is the next big thing. It's time to get on board before your competitors do. Did you know that putting video on a page can increase conversions by 80%? Studies have shown that 74% of users who watched an "explainer" video subsequently made a purchase. Usage of video can lead to a huge boost in conversions.

Promotional videos can foster trust. Most people are still skeptical about buying services on the internet because they fear being cheated. Effective marketing videos present your services in a conversational and informational form. Learning new information helps your potential client to lower their guard and listen.

Videos cause visitors to spend more time on your site. Longer exposure builds trust, and signals to search engines that your site has good content. You're 53 times more likely show up first on Google if you have a video on your website. Since Google now owns YouTube, there has been a significant increase in how much videos affect your search engine rank.

5. Finding the Time

I've given you a ton of work… maybe too much. Here you are working late into the night asking yourself, "Wait… what's a meta tag?" Before you get yourself to the point of thinking "there's too much to do so I'll take a nap", let's build a strategy.

Develop a Plan

Write down all the goals from this guide that you would like to complete. Prioritize and start attributing tasks to each one of those goals. For example, if you want to turn your website into a lead gen machine, #1 write an eBook, #2 develop a contact form that will redirect to a free PDF on completion, and #3 place your PDF on your website with contact form.

Break it Down into a Calendar

It'll probably take 2–4 weeks to write an eBook, and have it designed and edited. This is your priority for month #1. The priority for month #2 is to place that paper on your website as a 'call-to-action'.

Devote a Set Amount of Time Each Week

Block out time on your calendar. I like to label my blocked-out time as 'Out of the Office, Personal Health' so that no one is tempted to schedule over it or talk me into a meeting. If you can't get anything done without a thousand distractions, consider heading to a café or the library to focus. Even if your business is swarming with leads, marketing is priority number one. Having a lot of work to do today doesn't mean there will be any tomorrow. Get on top of your marketing now, and it will help you during down-times.

Delegate or Outsource

If you're lucky enough to have a marketing department, send this handy little guide to their desk! If the marketing team laughs and points to their to-do list, they may need a little help. Luckily, you have me! I would be happy to help on your journey to create an internet lead-generating machine. Your marketing department can even edit, add, and manipulate the website with their own login after I'm finished.