

asurable benefits for the effort, though the payoff — more leads and a higher conversion rate — can be very worthwhile.

He suggested getting referrals for SEO professionals from those you know and trust.

It helps to constantly test, monitor and evaluate the effectiveness a Web site's various elements, Selliken said, and he offered one example of an effective call to action: "Hint: 'Ask a Question' works a whole lot better than 'Inquire about this property.'"

Too many agents are not doing enough analytics of Web site traffic, he said. "Once the design is done, someone has to be obsessive about analytics."

Creating the best points of entry to Web sites based on the inquiries that drive visitors to the site is also an important design element, Selliken said.

Justin Britt, another panelist who is a founding partner and is responsible for online marketing and Web site usability at Hawaii Life Real Estate Services, shared a story about how an effective Web site led to a massive change in the company's business model.

Riding on the success of its Web site as a referral-based brokerage company from 2004-07, Hawaii Life became a full-service brokerage company.

Its Web site, [HawaiiLife.com](http://HawaiiLife.com), is now one of the most-visited real estate sites in Hawaii.

"To get to the top of the search engines you have to become an authority on the subject ... it means having the most useful content that your clients are going to use and come back to," he said.

"It could mean having the best real estate search site and real estate tools available. It could mean having the best blog and information available."

Britt said that SEO and design have to go hand-in-hand when building a site, and that the site architects need to be working in concert with one another.

"The best place to look for traffic is the traffic you already have," he said, and a great design can better capitalize on that traffic.

He echoed Selliken's call for professional site creation. "You can't do this on your own. You can't just sit down and create a Web site."

He added, "You have to be willing to spend money to make money, and it's not going to happen right away."

Identifying a niche market and the relevant keywords are key to the design strategy, he noted.

## Craig: Tech has a role in social causes

### Craigslist founder focuses on the good things

By Leslie Mladinich

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SAN FRANCISCO — Craig Newmark of Craigslist isn't so much a big real estate guy as a person who is just "bearing witness" to some of the good work people around the world are doing and then trying to publicize it — all the while acting as a customer service representative for a site that boasts 50 million users and 22 billion page views each month.

“There’s a lot of people doing good work that we don’t hear about, and in my own small way I am trying to get the word out. My contributions are pretty miniscule ... the people doing the really big stuff need to get the word out better,” he said Wednesday at the Inman News Real Estate Connect conference.

Some of the “good stuff” that Newmark is paying attention to includes veterans’ rights, support money for micro-businesses, and drawing attention to new Web sites and technology projects that make the work and spending of government more transparent. Newmark said the new administration has given the signal that reworking government from the ground up is “OK,” and technology can play an important role in that.

“It’s not hard to write code that drives data and tells what is going on,” he said, noting that real estate agents in particular have wide access to data.

“The hard part is commitment to getting people involved and the infrastructure. The idea is that a lot of people who are really good like (former U.S. state department employee and counterterrorism czar) Richard Clarke are getting well paid in the private industry. We need a call to service for good people to make things happen,” he said.

Newmark said he believes most people are doing good things. But as far as the bad ones who have been abusing Craigslist for illegal and even sinister purposes, he is still a strong advocate for site viewers policing it instead of his modest staff.

A lawsuit from eBay filed last year is “grinding away slowly,” he told Inman News, while the so-called “Craigslist Killer” — a man who used Craigslist’s adult services to solicit a prostitute and is accused of murdering her — has shined the light on what is appropriate for users to post under adult services. Questions also remain about how much his staff should monitor housing notices for discriminatory and illegal descriptions.

Since the housing meltdown, real estate agents and property owners have flocked to Craigslist to advertise foreclosed, short sale and other distressed properties. Although he said he hasn’t kept track of how many postings involve these real estate categories, he said in an interview that he didn’t feel the need to verify some of the specific financial terms owners are trying to entice buyers with.

“That might put us in the role of publisher, and that would be bad,” he said.

Newmark says he keeps a pulse on the real estate world in his neighborhood with [CurbedSF](#) for information on interesting sites and properties rather than for financial or investment reasons. As for how Realtors can get involved in promoting some of the social causes he has been keeping his eye on, his advice is for them to keep doing what they are doing.

“People need a place to live and Realtors need to make a living. If you help people make a living and you help people get a place to live — that’s a good thing.”

*Leslie Mladinich is a freelance writer in the San Francisco Bay Area.*