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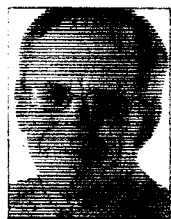
# HOMES

Sunday, April 17, 2011 ★ Section J

## Internet is big for buyers

**W**hat would real estate do without the Internet?

If I had asked that question a few years ago, the reply would have been, "Inter-what?" But these days, the real estate agent who hasn't latched onto the possibilities offered by the World Wide Web is rare.



**Alan J. Heavens**  
*On the House*

A recent survey commissioned by Prudential Fox & Roach supports the overwhelming importance of the Internet — to home buyers especially.

Results of the survey, conducted by the Reed Organization and based on 284 responses to questionnaires

e-mailed to several thousand Philadelphia-area buyers and sellers, show that the Internet plays an oversized role.

That starts with choosing an agent, according to the survey results.

Among the 43 percent of buyers who reported using Internet resources for agent selection, the most important resources were the website of the real estate broker the agent represented, a real estate website such as Realtor.com, and a search engine such as Google.

Thirty-five percent said they used  
See **ON THE HOUSE** on J12

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**On the House** By Alan J. Heavens

## The Internet is big with buyers

**ON THE HOUSE** from J1 recommendations found on social-media sites such as Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, or Twitter.

Nearly 42 percent said they first saw the house they eventually purchased online.

Only 14 percent of home sellers mentioned an Internet search as the resource used to begin selling a home.

Among the 40 percent of sellers using the Internet in selecting an agent, the three most popular resources were broker's websites, a real estate website, and an Internet search engine.

Almost two-thirds of home buyers said they used other resources, beyond their agents, to identify potential homes, with five of the top six resources being on the Internet, including a real estate website (63 percent), the website of the agent's real estate firm (54 percent), and a search engine (39 percent).

Riding through a neighborhood continues to be an important source of information for a home search (54 percent), but

other studies have shown that the Internet is used to reduce the number of houses a prospective buyer will physically visit.

Real estate websites were the most widely used Internet resources among the home buyers responding, used by 63 percent of them.

The big three among these sites were Realtor.com (64 percent), Zillow (61 percent), and Trulia (51 percent).

Google (90 percent) dominated among search engines cited by survey respondents. Yahoo was second (25 percent), followed by Bing (10 percent).

Just 8 percent of the home buyers responding to the survey used newspaper websites in their searches, making those a distant fourth among possible Internet resources.

Among this small group of users, Philly.com dominated, cited by 52 percent. (Philly.com is owned by Philadelphia Media Network Inc., which also owns The Inquirer and the Philadelphia Daily News.)

Fewer than one in 20 home

buyers responding used social-media sites in their home searches. Facebook was the dominant site identified, mentioned by 69 percent.

Internet use by buyers was extensive, and it was used for a wide variety of activities associated with the process of searching for and buying a house. Eighty percent of the buyers responding to the survey reported frequent or occasional use of the Internet.

The highest frequency of use — frequently and occasionally, according to the survey respondents — was reported this way: search for homes (99 percent); look at pictures of a property (98 percent); get pricing or other information (95 percent).

And, the home buyers reported, they were likely to check with multiple broker websites, not just the site of the broker who represented them.

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