

REAL ESTATE

Houlihan Lawrence personalizes real estate process with lifestyle filters

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Darien, CT listing on Houlihan Lawrence

By FORREST CARDAMENIS

Real estate brokerage firm Houlihan Lawrence is capitalizing on digital tools to help its clients move "North of NYC."

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The Christie's International Real Estate affiliate and digital agency King & Partners have designed the North of NYC Web site that organizes properties according to lifestyle personas, offering curated recommendations alongside each. The method more directly services consumers on an individual level, helping to forge the strong bonds that help sell properties.

"Real estate websites feel a bit too utilitarian at times restricted to simply searching for a house that fits into certain criteria and checks off the right boxes," said Tony King, Founder and CEO of King & Partners. "But before a buyer chooses an actual house, they must first choose the neighborhood where they'd like to be living we wanted to create a site that helped with that process.

"Homebuyers have to emotionally connect with an area, and the best way to establish this connection is by creating an engaging narrative and an interactive online experience that captures the essence of what it's like to actually live somewhere where to eat, what to do for fun, etc," he said. "Several interesting characters have made the transition from NYC to the North of NYC' area (specifically the Hudson Valley and Western Connecticut), and I think telling their stories is a great way for potential homeowners to get a sense of what it's like to live in this region."

Know your client

Believing that selling property is primarily about forming relationships, North of NYC understands clients in terms of lifestyle preferences and connecting with them in a more personal way.

North of NYC first asks visitors to identify with one of six personas: The Villager, the Equestrian, the Trailblazer, the Waterfronter, the Locavore or the Cosmopolitan. Each option then highlights a number of neighborhoods based on the associated traits.



The Villager, for example, will explore neighborhoods with active sidewalk and coffee shop cultures, such as Bedford, Scarsdale and Port Chester, NY or Riverside, CT. The Locavore, for comparison, will be offered looks at neighborhoods where farm-to-table can become a reality, including Millbrook and Woodstock.

Each lifestyle page also includes a list of recommended locales that fit the lifestyle, from Constitution Marsh Audubon Center and Sanctuary in Garrison, NY for the Trailblazer to the lively Greenwich Avenue in Greenwich, CT for the Cosmopolitan.

After determining their lifestyle and sorting through recommendations, clicking on a neighborhood or city will take the user to another page with a video highlighting the city's culture and interviewing local residents and city employees.

North of NYC White Plains, NY video

Scrolling down from the video, data on the neighborhood and its real estate, including links to download quarterly or monthly reports, are available. Further down, the option to directly search for homes in various communities associated with the lifestyle is available.

While the real estate sector has embraced digital through virtual tours, photographs and communications, it has primarily been in aiding the pre-existing business model. Houlihan Lawrence and King & Partners are instead creating a digital experience that matches the desires of local consumers.

This personalized shopping experience will leave a stronger impression on the prospective consumer, who is free to explore different cities and properties more freely.



Greenwich, CT house on sale via Houlihan Lawrence

Additionally, North of NYC will also help the brokerage firm connect with two coveted demographics. The suburbs outside New York have long been popular destinations for affluents as they get older and are also beginning to attract millennials because they maintain access to the city's cultural hotspots without sacrificing space and privacy.

In addition to social media and search-engine marketing, Houlihan Lawrence is testing partnerships with parenting publishers in New York City to take advantage of the tendency to move to which having a child gives way.

"I think we're going to start to see more and more platforms like this, that aim to capture the lifestyle of an area." Mr. King said. "Consumers millennials in particular can use the platform to find nice spots to explore on the weekends, then naturally progress to searching for homes in these areas. And because the content is so good, Houlihan Lawrence is really able to build trust with these new buyers."

Getting personal

Real estate marketers are tuning into their target audiences, adapting their methods as new consumer segments enter the market.

Realogics Sotheby's International Realty (RSIR), the brokerage's largest Pacific affiliate in the Pacific Northwest recently launched a publication geared toward the region's influx of Chinese individuals.

The all-Mandarin "Seattle Luxury Living," released in partnership with Tiger Oak Publications, will target the affluent Chinese who have immigrated to or are visiting the Seattle metropolitan area, particularly Bellevue, WA, as the area is currently undergoing an immigration wave. Speaking to consumers in their own language is a necessary step in forming strong relationships and converting sales ([see story](#)).

In another example, Briggs Freeman Sotheby's International Realty, the real estate firm's affiliate in Texas, closed the largest transaction in the company's history.

The W.T. Waggoner Ranch in Vernon, TX, listed for \$725 million, was sold to American businessman, sports team owner and rancher Stan Kroenke, marking a record for the company. This unique property, first established in 1849 called for a far-reaching, global campaign to find the right buyer ([see story](#)).

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