



January 24, 2001

## The Easy Way to Be #1 On Many Search Engines

Realtors® are always asking me, “How can I get the search engines to rank my Web site higher.”

Well, the answer takes about 50 pages because of how complex search engines have gotten in ranking sites. So I won't bother here. But there is a way you can rise to the top of a few key engines. Every time. Sadly, it will cost you money. Here's how:

Today, especially in a large metro area, your site competes with thousands of Realtor® and realty chain sites for top engine positions. That means your chances to be first are tiny. And there are not many experts who can help you, either. Because in megalopolis areas there are likely only fifty Webmasters, and one or two Realtor®-Webmasters, who, all false claims aside, truly *do* know how to get a site to the top.

Conversely, Realtors® in a sparsely populated region of the US with, say, only 25,000 to 50,000 people living in the entire county, have a far better chance of rising to the top because their realty sites compete with only a few others. In such areas, even a moderately skilled Webmaster or Web-savvy Realtor can likely dominate on most search engines. Especially if he has lots of links on other sites pointing to his site (Engines favor ranking sites by relevancy and popularity, too).

But most Realtors® aren't so lucky. And so some of them turn to the bid search engines to achieve top ranking.

A bid search engine is one on which you bid against other site owners to have your site come up number one, or two, or whatever—whenever people search for certain strings of key words. The higher up you want your site's presence to appear, the more it will cost you. When your site's title and description (which YOU get to word the way you want) gets clicked on by a GoTo.com visitor, you pay the amount of money that you bid. So if you bid ten cents for a key word phrase (which might or might not be enough money to earn you the top spot depending on other bids) and GoTo visitors click on your link 100 times in a week, that costs you \$10.

At this writing, the current first place position bid for the key word string “manhattan real estate” is astonishingly, only \$0.06 per click. Yet, “new york real estate” costs \$0.61 cents. The term “los angeles real estate” is up to \$0.73 and “orange county real estate” is up to \$1.45 with two realty firms and one Realtor® in an ever shifting battle for position number one. To keep your site high up, you need to check back often and re-bid.

“Grand Rapids real estate” is at \$0.19 and tiny Truckee, CA so far has no one bidding for the number one spot, (although I believe the Schaller Family there (<http://www.schallerandschaller.com>) might have that one nailed down by now with a bid of

just one or two cents.) When no one has bid on a term, GoTo.com simply ranks and displays sites like any other search engine.

To find out what the top key word bids are for your city, just go to [GoTo.com](http://GoTo.com) and search for the name of your city with “real estate” (no quotes) after it. The city’s name with “real estate” is the most often searched for key word phrase used when people are seeking homes or Realtors®. Example: “oakland real estate” or “real estate oakland” and even “oakland ca real estate.” But “real estate” is not the only key phrase to use with the name of your city.

Others include realty, Realtor®, homes, property, condos, search for homes, mls, search mls, town home and many more. You can safely assume that the key word phrases most frequently searched for on GoTo.com are virtually identical to those on Yahoo! or on any other search engine.

To find out for sure which realty-related terms for your city are the ones most frequently searched for on GoTo.com, you use their handy [search term suggestion](#) tool .

Go there and enter, say, “Oakland real estate.” In September, that term was searched for 96 times. At the time I searched for it, it was in third position; “real estate oakland” was in first place. (Key words, by the way, are not case-sensitive on GoTo.com.)

Oakland Real Estate

Searches done in September 2000

CountSearch Term

96 oakland real estate

21 real estate oakland

11 real estate oakland california

10 oakland ca real estate

10 oakland california real estate

8 real estate oakland ca

7 oakland california real estate for sale 94611

7 real estate in oakland

7 real estate in oakland california

6 oakland county real estate

5 oakland county michigan real estate

5 real estate for sale oakland california

5 real estate oakland county mi

“Chicago real estate” was searched for 702 times. So you can imagine how many times that same term was searched for on far larger [Yahoo!](#), [Excite](#), [Hotbot](#), [Google](#), [AltaVista](#) and others.

The suggestion tool shows you related searches that include your term, plus how many times that term was searched for last month. To discover the current bid for #1 position on GoTo, you have to search for that term. At this writing, “oakland real estate in third position sold for \$0.16 and “real estate oakland” in the top spot went for \$0.20.

Why do Realtors® bid to be high up on GoTo.com? Because when they do, not only do they better their chances that a consumer will go to their Web site from GoTo.com, but they also reach about 75% of people who use the Web. Why? Because GoTo.com, while itself being a top-10 search engine, is partnered with several other huge Web sites, and many small ones, that prominently display the GoTo results.

Paying more to keep yourself in the first or second place position on GoTo can be well worth it. GoTo claims that the #1 position gets from three to five times the clicks of secondary ones!

But here's the monster payoff: GoTo's top results are now being displayed, along with other engine results, on America Online (<http://search.aol.com>), which has 25 million members, Microsoft Internet Explorer (86% of people use this browser and its default home page is one from MSN.com) (<http://www.msn.com>), Earthlink, (<http://www.earthlink.net>) CNET (<http://www.cnet.com>), Netscape Search (<http://www.netscape.com>) and hundreds more small engines and sites. At least 75% of web users visit some function of these huge sites daily!

Is GoTo the only bid engine game in town? Nope. Perhaps the next best bid site is Sprinks.com (<http://www.sprinks.com>). Why? Because when you get high ranking there, your results are also displayed on realty-related searches done at [About.com](#), one of the world's biggest Web sites. Other [bid-for-position sites](#) include Findwhat.com, 7Search.com, SearchHound.com, Kanoodle.com, OneSearch.com, SimpleSearch.com and nearly 50 others.

So, never again despair that your site comes up poorly on search engines. Now you can do something about it. Is paying from a penny to a dollar or two per click to be #1 on GoTo.com and other bid sites worth it? Well, if your site cannot be found any other way on the Web due to so much competition, it could be. Remember, it takes only one resultant sale to pay for years of pay-per-click costs.

Many today believe that Realtors® should be spending at least half of their marketing budget on the Web. But just having your site visited a lot will not bring you inquiries that lead to sales, unless you first have a truly superior content-packed Web site.

Oh yes, and you will have to master [online customer relationship marketing](#) to effectively communicate with your visitors and win their loyalty. That's all.

So, are bid engines good for you? You bet they are. But it's gonna cost you money and time.

And by just knowing that bid-engines exist, you can be atop all of them.

---

**Written by Bill Koelzer**

---

Copyright © 2001 [Realty Times](#). All Rights Reserved.