

Not just a Flash in the pan

Growing in tandem with the Internet boom has been the development of web-based advertising and marketing.

Firms such as Posner Advertising in New York have been among the pioneers of some of the latest technologies designed to get firms maximum Internet exposure and what's called search engine optimization, basically, more hits on the net.

Posner holds several of the city's top residential marketing accounts, including 823 Park Avenue, Sky New York at 555 West 59th and Avalon Chrystie Place, for which the firm recently "cracked the code" in Flash technology.

Until now, websites designed in Flash (which, at its most basic, is animation) typically could not be found through search engines such as Google. Posner developed a combination of Flash and search engine optimization in a website for www.avalonchrystieplace.com, the website for AvalonBay Communities' first luxury rental community in Manhattan

Ross Anderson, managing director of interactive services at Posner, said, "We had an idea and a client that is always looking to push the envelope with technology. With Avalon Chrystie Place, we've blended the visual excitement of Flash with search engine compatibility on Google and other sites."

When Anderson first got into real estate marketing four years ago, he says the industry was just getting its feet wet.

With him at the helm of the technology drive, Posner started creating web sites and lead capturing systems, which are basically contact forms and data bases that track online traffic. It allowed firms to see which leads were coming in from the Internet versus print. That evolved into back office systems and Posner has also developed a scheduling application whereby website visitors can schedule and appointment to speak with a sales consultant, all online. Sales coordinators can then print out a daily, weekly or monthly list of who is coming in. ■

Getting Googled ... it doesn't have to hurt

Google is one of the Internet's biggest search engines and its purpose is to return to the user the most relevant website for a particular search item.

If you type in, say, NY apartments, and the first thing that comes up is Houston, that's not a good experience. Google wants to keep your business, so it indexes millions of websites by sending out what are called "spiders" that read through the content of a website, follow all of the links so it can read all of the text on all of the different pages and then throw up the most relevant sites when a user types in say, pink elephants.

Herein lies the problem with Flash

which search engines see as one giant movie or image and therefore cannot accurately read.

Manhattan-based Posner Advertising created a Flash website that's "spider friendly" and will therefore pop up in search engines when users are looking for AvalonBay apartments. Once you're on the Internet, or Worldwide Web, firms can also track their ranking through such programs as Alexa

Firms such as Posner also conduct optimization campaigns for clients, which basically gets their information to pop up on search engines. There are several ways of doing this. One popular way is to have links to and from your website

to other relevant sites. Remember, Google's "spider" will then read your website text (and/or Flash) and then all the others linked to it, therefore increasing its likelihood of getting Googled.

Of course, like everything else, there are ways around this - which explains why you get pink lingerie when your looking for elephants. Some websites allow you to post a link to your website or firms can actually buy links on highly ranked websites and, the third option is, a link exchange, basically, you let me on yours and I'll let you on mine.

All of which is designed for search engine optimization. ■