

## **A Nice Real Estate Trading Portal: from a User's Perspective**

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We have visited and used many of the real estate trading portals coming on stream. This is what we prefer or hope to see as a user:

- a) **A Clear Theme:** a couple of these portals have a very fancy "enter" page which does not even suggest that it has anything to do with real estate. The same applies if only specific sectors of the market are included.
- b) **Avoid Unnecessary Graphics and Music:** these things are fine and nice and would be appropriate for an entertainment site. People who are really serious in finding homes or offices will find these features distracting. Also, they slow the downloading process (not everyone has access to broadband).
- c) **Comprehensiveness and "Total-ness":** it seems that most local real estate portals are still building up their content. However, eventually portals which can (almost or practically) claim to have encompassed all available property listings would have a better chance of beating the competition.
- d) **Easy to Comprehend Website Structure:** while a site map can be used, a good arrangement of "headings", "sub-headings" and so on (clicking buttons) may also give a useful indication.
- e) **Efficient Website Operation:** it may be better to install not only "vertical" links e.g. from a heading to a sub-heading, but also "horizontal" links e.g. from sub-heading to sub-heading.
- f) **Supportive Content and Links:** for instance, content or links related to real estate data, information and analyses. Content and links to complimentary services such as banking, legal etc would also help. However, avoid putting in (too much) financial/business news as real estate websites cannot compete with those portals and vice versa.
- g) **If certain content is not yet installed, inform the user:** rather than let the user find out that the content does not exist. This related to professionalism.
- h) **Q&A Support:** often the users would have questions on the markets or the web operations. A facility to help the users and an effective/speedy response arrangement would enhance "loyalty".
- i) **Compatible with files written on common software:** currently, if the user finds say the \$/square foot of a property useful on the internet, he/she would have to type the same figure onto his/her own Excel-based calculation table. If however the data on the internet can "generally" be automatically downloaded onto a typical Excel-based proforma (by having the cell in the Excel proforma pointed to that particular figure in the URL), then better operational efficiency is achieved. The only risk is the page being altered (of its content) or deleted.