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Web-site success is normally adjudged on how many eye-balls look at you. In Western Australia, REIWA's member owned web site ranks second by this measure, has undergone a significant upgrade in recent times and is constantly evolving. www.reiwa.com is owned by member agents and being a "not-for-profit" organisation the cost to sellers whose properties appear on the site is relatively low compared to other commercially owner and operated sites.

The largest player in this market is part of a publicly listed company with their eye on the money. Their service to their real estate agent clients is, in my experience, very poor considering the contribution they make to their profits. Their fees continue to rise each year (one of their products has risen in cost by over 9,000% in five years) and such is their size they can afford to spend sellers' advertising contributions on television adverts and promotional campaigns. They made around 90 million dollars last year.

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Of course, sellers want their properties to appear prominently on the top ranking real estate web site and are usually happy to pay for it. After all, recent statistics show that 78 per cent of all buyers first see properties they purchase in the on-line space. However, contributors to the web site (agents, their sellers / landlords and third party advertisers) need to be mindful they are feeding a beast that cares less for the clients

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they serve. And remember, just about all of the listings on the largest site appear on reiwa.com anyway due to the high percentage of agents being members of REIWA.

A growing concern I have with many sites other than reiwa.com is their invitation to would-be sellers and landlords to "find an agent near you". When thinking about selling or renting a property, owners will often look on-line in order to determine which agents they should select. In this process, it is tempting for future vendors and landlords to fill out an on-line form which the web site provider then forwards to subscriber agents inviting them to compete for the listing. Unsurprisingly, there is a high cost to the agent to simply obtain the contact details of the "lead"; a cost the agent is likely to pass on to the seller. These "lead fees" rise further should a property be listed and sold as a result of an agent competing for the listing in this forum. And the best agents don't need to compete in the space anyway.

REIWA's agent profile pages are, on the other hand, excellent. They provide the most comprehensive information about professional local agents active in your area and put the consumer in control of choosing an agent, rather than having a desperate agent "bid" for your listing and passing on the cost.