

User Experience Review

Sample

This is a sample review of user experience issues on a typical website, realtor.ca. (Online real estate is ripe for revolution.)

Two points of note:

- This review simply highlights issues; with my clients I provide practical, actionable recommendations to address every issue—so you get both insight and guidance.
- As I note at the end, this review looks solely at addressing what's there. The bigger opportunity is thinking differently: challenging assumptions, making the leaps no one else has yet realized.

So my intention with this sample review? That you begin to look at your online presence with new eyes, and see the opportunity for revolutionary improvement.

It's not rocket science, and I'd love to show you how.

But first, the sample review.

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Overall design

Sample review of [realtor.ca, Listing R2068813](#)

The screenshot shows a real estate listing for a single-family home. At the top, there's a navigation bar with categories like Residential and Commercial, and links for Find a REALTOR®, Sign In, and language options EN and FR. Below the header, there's a large image of the house and its surroundings, followed by a collage of interior photos showing a staircase, a living room, and a kitchen. A back button is visible above the main content area.

Property Details:

- Price:** \$7,498,000
- Listing ID:** R2068813
- Rooms:** 5 bedrooms, 7 bathrooms

Features:

- Favourite
- Compare
- Print
- Financial
- Multimedia

Property Type: Single Family

Building Type: House

Title: Freehold

Land Size: 19160 sqft

Built in: 2014

Description:

Sit on a sunfilled C-D-S on a 19,160 sf (.435 acre) estate, is this new World Class Contemp res feat 180 degree ocean vws! Compl privacy. Dramatic flrpln w/classic architectural enhancements. Approx 7372 sqft w/gorgeous island kit, brkfst bar, dry pantry, dinette area & adj FR. Vaulted plantation-style ceilings, stone F/P, elegant

Contact Information:

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Malcolm Hasman

Here's the page in question, a real estate listing on realtor.ca.

Overall, this is a **confusing page layout**, underselling the property:

- There is **no clear visual hierarchy**—everything competes with everything else. Notice your eye darting around the page, trying to find a place to ‘land’.
- The property pictures draw the eye, as pictures often do. However, there is **no main picture**, so all four pictures compete with each other. Which picture best represents the house?
- On a larger screen, such as that used for this screenshot, there is a lot of **wasted space down the sides of the page**. As a site that should deliver a compelling and engaging experience, this is a missed opportunity.

Let's look at the parts of the page in more detail.

Top of the page

Sample review of [realtor.ca, Listing R2068813](#)

< Back

4348 ROCKRIDGE ROAD, West Vancouver, British Columbia V7W1A7

Photos Email a Friend

< Back

The ‘Back’ link takes up the entire row. This is **valuable space** at the top of the page, mostly being wasted at present.



Several issues affect the preview of the property pictures:

1. There is no indication of **how many pictures** there are, so users’ expectations are not set in advance.
2. The ‘right arrow’ scrolls through the pictures **relatively slowly** (even when clicked), making quick browsing—as well as locating a specific picture—slow and frustrating. Go and try it.
3. The pictures are **mismatched in size**, which looks unprofessional and will subconsciously affect perceptions of the property.
4. There are **no captions** for the pictures, so for some pictures it is not clear which rooms are being shown.

4348 ROCKRIDGE ROAD, West Vancouver, British Columbia V7W1A7

The address is just **plain text**, when it is an easy opportunity to make it selectable, bringing up a map of the property’s location.

Listing detail

Sample review of [realtor.ca, Listing R2068813](#)

\$7,498,000
Listing ID: R2068813

5 7

Favourite Compare Print Financial Multimedia

Property Type: Single Family Building Type: House Title: Freehold

Land Size: 19160 sqft Built in: 2014

Details Demographics Walk Score® + Directions

Show measurements in Imperial ▾

Description

Sit on a sunfilled C-D-S on a 19,160 sf (.435 acre) estate, is this new World Class Contemp res feat 180 degree ocean vws! Compl privacy. Dramatic flrpln w/classic architectural enhancements. Approx 7372 sqft w/gorgeous island kit, brkfst bar, dry pantry, dinette area & adj FR. Vaulted plantation-style ceilings, stone F/P, elegant

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Property Type: Single Family Building Type: House Title: Freehold

Land Size: 19160 sqft Built in: 2014

Details Demographics Walk Score® + Directions

The term “Multimedia”, with its icon, is **too vague**, is **outdated** in usage, and **focuses on the tools** (video, audio, etc.) rather than the benefits they bring.

In addition, why not **surface the information** it contains—which in this case is a link to the REALTOR® website—rather than hiding that information behind a generic “Multimedia” button?

This is primarily **reference information** that does not warrant such a strong visual prominence on the page. Make it clearly available, but don’t make it the sole focus of the property’s presentation, especially in such a plain, text-only manner with dry labels and terminology.

Because “Walk Score®” is the start of the third tab’s name—and because users often **scan information** by reading the start of text, rather than reading in detail—it is likely some users will not realize the **tab also contains directions** (and a map) for the property.

Listing detail (continued)

Sample review of [realtor.ca, Listing R2068813](#)

\$7,498,000
Listing ID: R2068813

5 7 ft²

Favourite Compare Print Financial Multimedia

Property Type: Single Family Building Type: House Title: Freehold
Land Size: 19160 sqft Built in: 2014

Details Demographics Walk Score® + Directions

Show measurements in Imperial ▾

Description

Sit on a sunfilled C-D-S on a 19,160 sf (.435 acre) estate, is this new World Class Contemp res feat 180 degree ocean vws! Compl privacy. Dramatic flrln w/classic architectural enhancements. Approx 7372 sqft w/gorgeous island kit, brkfst bar, dry pantry, dinette area & adj FR. Vaulted plantation-style ceilings, stone F/P, elegant

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Another issue with visual prominence is seen here. This measurements selector **dominates the focus** right above the all-important description.

A measurements selector!

Allow the user to set this preference elsewhere on the page or site.

Improved editorial guidelines and reviews are likely needed so that **descriptions like this are improved**. With **abbreviations and acronyms everywhere**—such as ‘C-D-S’, ‘adj FR’, and ‘island kit’—and **no paragraph breaks**, this is not a description that best represents a \$7.5M property.

Why is the Email action so prominent? Any form of contact will be valuable to a REALTOR®. All Calls To Action (CTAs) should be collectively clear.

It is also not clear where the ‘Jason Soprovich’ link will take the user, given there is already a website link provided.

Jason Soprovich
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REALTOR® Website
Email REALTOR®

RoyalLePage Sussex J

Mobile web experience

Sample review of [realtor.ca, Listing R2068813](#)

The screenshot shows a mobile browser on a TELUS network at 4:32 PM with 52% battery. The address bar shows 'realtor.ca'. The page displays a house at 4348 ROCKRIDGE ROAD, West Vancouver, British Columbia V7W1A7. Navigation tabs for 'Details' and 'Location' are visible, along with a refresh and star icons. A large photo of the house is shown, with a caption indicating 20 Photo(s). The price is listed as \$7,498,000, and it is marked as 'For sale'. The MLS® number is R2068813. Below the photo, there is a 'Description' section with text about the house being a sunfilled C-D-S on a 19,160 sf (.435 acre) estate, featuring 180 degree ocean views. At the bottom, there are navigation arrows, a share icon, a bookmark icon, and a save icon.

The mobile version of this page also has some notable issues.

First, consider that:

1. People now spend, on average, **more time on mobile** than on desktop.
2. For some people, especially travelers, **mobile is their only Internet access**.
3. Mobile is only going to **increase in importance**.

Because of this, the user experience issues on this page are in need of particular attention. Four examples:

- Not all the features on the desktop version are available on mobile. For example, there is **no mortgage calculator** and **no Walk Score®** here.
- Some features are **implemented differently on mobile**, preventing the user transferring their learned experience from the desktop site. For example, the 'star' icon to its right is the seeming equivalent of the 'heart' feature on the desktop site.
- There are **no menu and navigation options** for moving around the site, an unforgivable omission.
- There are several small design elements that give the impression of a lower level of professionalism. Note the **alignment issue below the 'Address' label** at the top of the page; the main photo that does not expand to the full width of the screen; the **blurry, non-retina** share and save icons; and the '**Photo(s)**' label that **does not adjust** based on how many photos there actually are.

This sample review does not cover all the user experience issues identified. This is very typical for most websites; there is much to be done, once you see your website with new eyes.

However, more importantly, this review purposely focuses **just on what's there**: the issues with layout, content, and interaction, as they are presented.

It does not address the bigger opportunity for **revolutionary online change** in the real estate industry. (One of many industries ready for revolution.) Doing away with the tired, old approach to online real estate listings, and getting to the core of what helps excited buyers find their new home. The opportunity is tantalizing.

For that, you will need to contact me.

As a teaser, here is food for thought for real estate:

- Why are online real estate listings often just a wall of **flat, lifeless information**?
- Are pictures and a single description—just tools in themselves—**really the building blocks** of an intuitive experience that really helps sell a property?
- A flat screen can never replace the experience of viewing a property. However, **what advantages does it have**, advantages that are difficult or impossible to represent on sheets of paper or even in-person with a REALTOR®?

In **any** market, I can be the catalyst for achieving online excellence.

Ready to make waves? I hope you're inspired to get in touch.

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