NAVIGATING ON-PAGE
SEO SUCCESS
IN REAL ESTATE

A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE

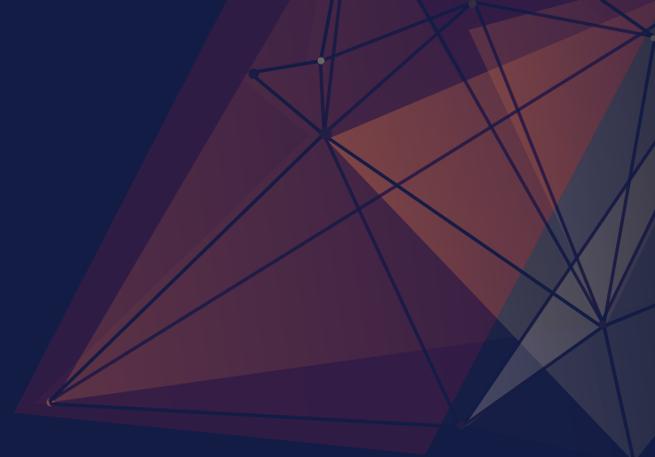*Sierra* Interactive

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WHAT IS ON-PAGE SEO?

Search engine optimization (SEO) is the process of improving your website's visibility in search engines. There are several different search engines, but the most ubiquitous is Google, so we'll mostly refer to that in this guide since it has ~90% of the search engine market share.

SEO is often broken down into three sub-areas:

On-page SEO (or On-site SEO)	Technical SEO	Off-page SEO (or Off-site SEO)

On-page SEO is exactly what it sounds like: all the things you can do on your website to improve its visibility. By strategically implementing on-page SEO techniques, real estate websites can attract more organic traffic, improve user engagement and ultimately increase the likelihood of converting visitors into leads or clients. This process ensures that real estate listings, blog posts and other content is easily discoverable by potential buyers or sellers, thereby maximizing the online presence and success of your real estate businesses.

In this guide, we'll talk about three elements of on-page SEO: content, user experience and internal linking.

THE FIRST RULE OF WEBSITE CONTENT

Let's be clear: Your website content should be written for people, not for Google. People are your audience. People have questions about buying and selling, Google doesn't. People will hire you to help them buy and sell, Google won't.

Google rewards websites that people find helpful. If you focus first and foremost on writing content for buyers and sellers, Google is more likely to reward you with higher search rankings. "How helpful your content is" is much more important than "how many times you used a keyword."

Keep that in mind as we talk about using keywords for SEO.

HOW TO OPTIMIZE A WEB PAGE

Every page should have a primary keyword and most will also have 2-3 secondary or related keywords. Your goal, since you write primarily for buyers and sellers, is to use these keywords as signals to help Google understand what each page is about.

Generally speaking, there are eight places to use keywords on a web page.

1   TITLE TAG

This is the most important on-page SEO signal. Your primary keyword needs to be in the title tag and preferably at the beginning. It's not something a human will see on the page, but it's what Google will often show as the clickable link in search results. The title tag can be as long as you want, but Google will only show about the first 60 characters.

2   META DESCRIPTION TAG

Like the title tag, this isn't something a person will see on the page. It's not even a ranking factor. So why are we including it here? Because Google will often use some or all of the meta description tag as the snippet below your link in its search results. So while it may not help you rank higher, it will likely play a role as buyers and sellers decide which link to click. The meta description tag can also be as long as you want, but Google will typically only show about 155-160 characters. Use your primary keyword and include the related/secondary keywords, too. Write this in such a way that it's likely to invite a searcher to click your link.

3   PAGE URL

The URL is another signal to Google (and the searcher) of what the page is about. If you have a page for homebuyers that explains the steps to buying a home in your city (let's use Denver as an example), and your primary keyword is "buying a home in Denver," the page URL should be **www.yourdomain.com/buying-a-home-in-denver**, and you'll want to use hyphens, not underscores.

4 HEADER TAGS

These are visible to a person as they read your content, and they also send a signal to Google of what the content is about and how it's organized.
A good page structure has the visible title of the page as an H1 tag and then sub-sections are H2s. If you have further sub-sections under your H2s, they become H3s, and so on.

So using that same example, the H1 on your page for homebuyers should use your primary keyword: Buying a Home in Denver. Then you have sub-sections (H2s) that say "How and Why to Get Pre-Qualified," "Beginning Your Denver Home Search," and so forth.

5 PAGE COPY

It's probably pretty obvious, but you should also use your primary and related keywords in the copy that you write for each page. But don't overdo it. Remember, you're writing for people, not for Google. Don't cram keywords into your copy every chance you get; write naturally and use them when it makes sense.
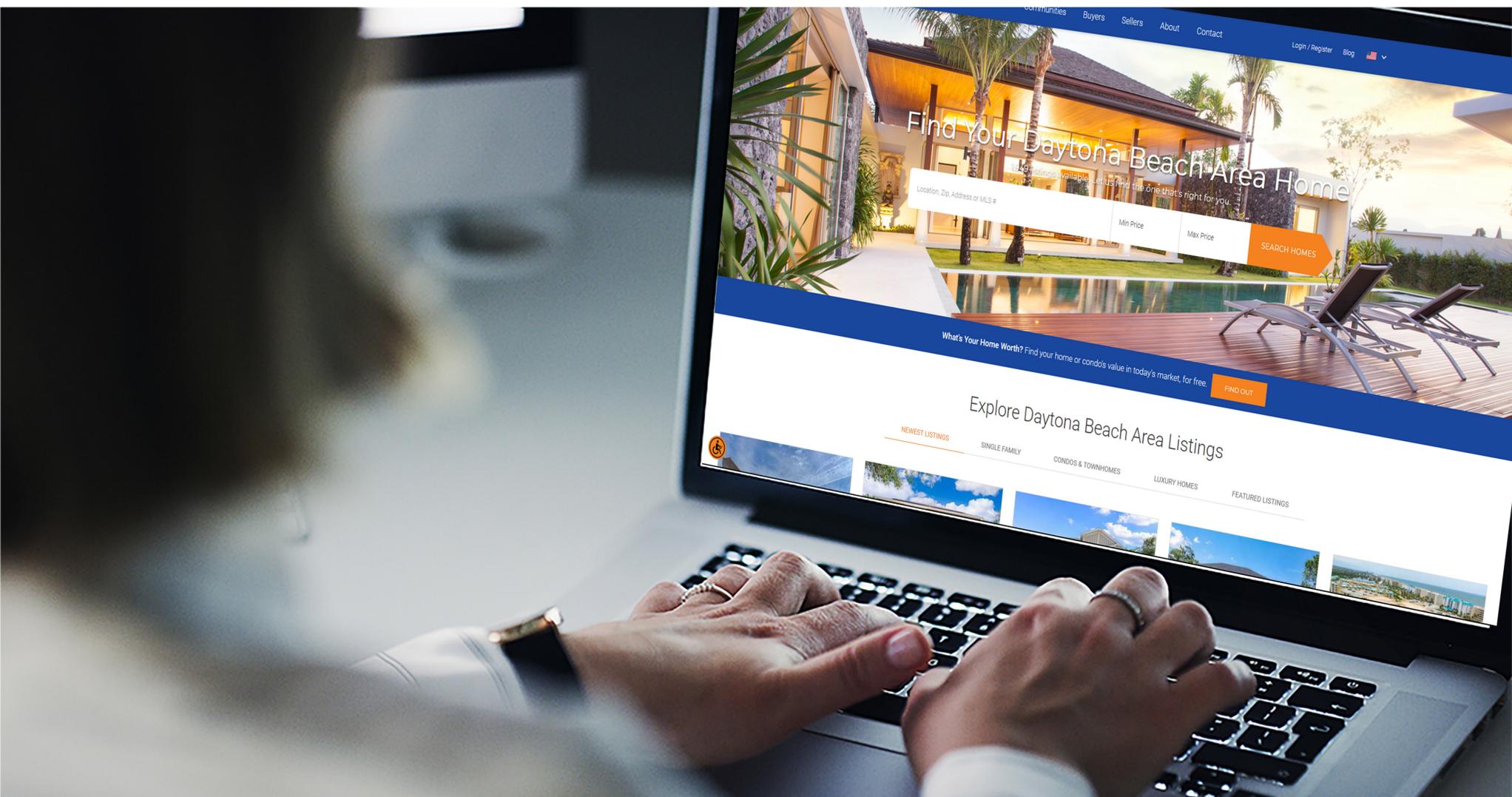
6   IMAGE FILENAMES… IF IT MAKES SENSE

On that same page for homebuyers in Denver, if you've made a great flowchart graphic that shows each step in the process, you can use the primary keyword in the filename: buying-a-home-in-denver.png. Again, use hyphens, not underscores. But only do this if it makes sense. If you're putting a photo on this page of a beautiful kitchen, don't name that image buying-a-home-in-denver.png.

7   IMAGE ALT TEXT…AGAIN, ONLY IF IT MAKES SENSE

That same advice applies to adding alt text to your images. Alt text exists primarily for blind and vision-impaired people, and you should add alt text to all images for their benefit. But if you're uploading that great flowchart to your page for homebuyers, you can add alt text like this: "A flowchart that shows the process for buying a home in Denver." In this example, you have great alt text that tells what the image is, but also has the primary keyword.

Both this and putting the keyword in image filenames (#6 above) are very small signals to Google of what the content is about. It's not the end of the world if you don't put keywords in your image filenames and alt text.

8   INTERNAL LINK ANCHOR TEXT

When linking from one page on your site to another page on your site, the text you use for the link (i.e.,, the anchor text) should include the primary keyword of the page you're linking to. This is a very important signal.

OPTIMIZE YOUR ON-PAGE SEO WITH A CMS THAT GIVES YOU FULL CONTROL

Sierra's website content management system (CMS) gives you full control over your site's meta tags like the URL structure, navigation, breadcrumbs, page keyword content and interlinking of site pages. This allows you to optimize your site at the macro level, including the structure of the site and how the pages link together, and the micro level, including the content and structure of each page and blog post, in a way that truly aligns with Google's recommended best practices.

BLOGGING IS YOUR #1 SEO TOOL

For real estate websites there are a few standard pages that are table stakes and therefore show up in some form on all of them: the home page, buyers page, sellers page, About Us/Me page and contact page.
In addition, you should have IDX listings along with Community pages that are unique to your market (remember the long-tail keywords!).
But the most important tool in your SEO toolbox is a blog because it's the primary way your website will help you stand out from the crowd. Here's why:

1 YOU'LL ATTRACT BUYER & SELLER LEADS

Your blog is where you'll answer all those questions that buyers and sellers are Googling today:

- "is [LOCATION] a good place to retire"
- "pros and cons of living in [LOCATION]"
- "cost of living [LOCATION] vs [LOCATION]"
- "how to sell my home fast"
- "do I need a real estate agent to sell my home" and so on
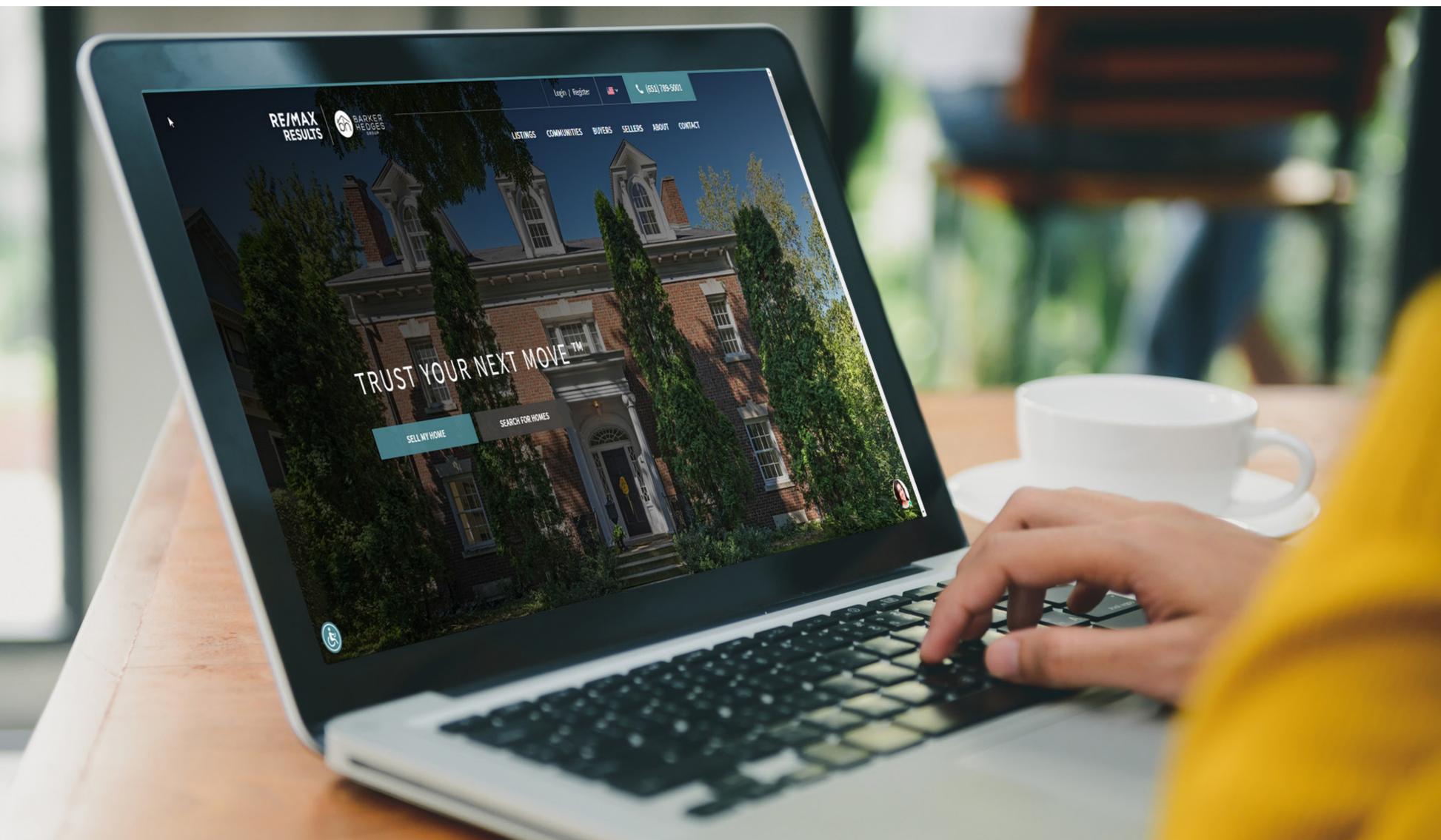
2   E.E.A.T

Your blog is where you'll establish the experience, expertise, authoritativeness and trustworthiness that Google wants to show in its search results.

3   OPPORTUNITY

Most of the national real estate portals are ignoring long-tail searches like these. That's an opportunity for you to earn Google traffic and new leads by writing great blog posts that answer those questions. Bonus: Most other agents in your market are also not creating content to answer long-tail searches!

It's okay if you're not a great writer; buyers and sellers aren't expecting you to be another Hemingway or Maya Angelou. They just want their questions answered. They want to learn from your experience and expertise.

If you really dislike writing, or don't have time, have someone write posts for you. You could even hire a great, local freelance writer who knows your area. Make sure the person understands the "voice" of your brand and the style/tone you want on your blog. And always double-check their work before you publish it.

You could even use an AI tool like ChatGPT to help. Google has said it's more concerned about the quality of your content than how it was created.
But understand this: ChatGPT and tools like it are probably not going to write the kind of high-quality articles that Google wants to rank highly (i.e., articles that reflect E-E-A-T) and that will convince buyers and sellers to hire you.

While ChatGPT and other tools like it (Jasper.ai, Copy.ai, etc.) can help you develop article ideas and outlines, we do not recommend publishing AI-written content word-for-word without editing, improving and adding your own unique brand and voice to it.

THE IMPORTANCE OF INTERNAL LINKS

An internal link is a link from one page on your site to another page on your site. If you ask 100 SEO practitioners to list the most underrated tactics, internal linking would surely show up on most of their lists.

First, you should use internal links generously. When you're writing a blog post that mentions "searching for homes in Savannah," you should link to the IDX page on your site where people can search for homes in Savannah. When you're writing a blog post with advice for first-time buyers, and you mention "buying a home in Denver," link to that page on your site for homebuyers – the one with the great flowchart that we talked about earlier.

Second, when you create internal links, optimize the anchor text to include the keyword of the page you're linking to. Anchor text is the text that makes up the clickable link. Using that same Denver homebuyer example, when you link from your blog post to the page for homebuyers, try to write it so the clickable link uses the primary keyword of the page you're linking to or one of the related/secondary keywords.

It might look like this one time: "If you're thinking about buying a home in Denver, there are five things you need to know…"

It might look like this the next time, using a related/secondary keyword: "Call or text us when you're ready to learn how to buy a home in Denver. We can't wait to meet you!"

Anchor text is an important signal telling Google what the page that you're linking to is about. Don't use "click here" as the clickable link when you're linking to an important page.

You may struggle to get links from other websites (which are also a very strong SEO signal), but you can make up for that to some degree by linking generously to your own content.

INTERNAL PAGE LINKING STRUCTURE IS EXTREMELY FLEXIBLE

This sounds technical, but what it means is simple: when you create content pages around long-tail keywords, it's easy to make those pages visible within your site so that Google can easily find them and understand how the pages relate to each other. This helps more of your pages rank more highly more quickly, and also increases site visitors' pages per visit and time on site.

A QUICK NOTE ON USER EXPERIENCE

SEO isn't just about getting traffic to your website. It's also about converting that traffic.

The experience a buyer or seller has when they get to your site will go a long way toward deciding if they raise their hand and say, "Can you help me buy/sell?"

Some aspects of user experience will also impact your site's ability to rank highly in Google's search results.

MOBILE-FRIENDLY DESIGN

For years, mobile search has been more common than desktop search. Google doesn't want to show sites in its mobile search results that don't look good or work well on mobile devices.

PAGE SPEED

Users don't like slow-loading pages. Google doesn't, either. Page speed is a small SEO ranking factor. Make sure images, for example, are optimized to load quickly.

INTUITIVE SITE NAVIGATION

It should be easy for both users and Google's crawlers to navigate from page-to-page on your site. Make sure all of your important pages are accessible from your main site navigation. Breadcrumb navigation, especially on an active blog, are also good for user experience and can help bots better understand your site's content hierarchy.

READABILITY

Using header tags (H1s, H2s, etc.) helps both users and Google understand the importance and relationship of concepts you write about.
Short paragraphs and bullet lists do the same.

ABOUT
SIERRA INTERACTIVE

Sierra Interactive develops residential real estate software and services for agents, teams and brokers in the U.S. and Canada. Sierra's proven lead generation and management solutions are trusted by top-performing teams and influential coaches in the real estate industry. Founded in 2007, Sierra is headquartered in Louisville, KY, but has a remote-first workforce across the U.S. Sierra is owned by Alpine Software Group (ASG), a unique software business specializing in building vertical SaaS companies and backed by private equity firm Alpine Investors.

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