



## CASE STUDY



# Mark-Taylor Residential Leads, Attracts, Retains & Profits

The Customer-Centric Local & Paid Search Solution

[WWW.PROPERTYCENTRIC.COM](http://WWW.PROPERTYCENTRIC.COM)



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*Mark-Taylor, an award-winning property management company, implemented Phoenix's first truly local search engine to deliver relevant, customized content for residents while providing monthly recurring revenue for the company.*

## **Challenge: Stay Ahead, Increase Resident Acquisition & Retention Rates**

Companies leading the way in innovation have to work diligently to stay ahead. Mark-Taylor Residential, an award-winning property management company, knows that creed well. Its leaders recognize that ongoing investments in the right people and the right technology ensure that the Mark-Taylor brand stays ahead of the curve.

Mark-Taylor is recognized for building some of America's top rated apartment communities, earning critical acclaim in the industry. The company prides itself on offering their valued residents the very best amenities to improve their lifestyles.



In a continuous effort to dialogue with its customers, the company regularly invests in the latest technology. However, the company knew they could do more to satisfy the information needs of its affluent, professional resident base. Leasing office employees often get swamped with resident questions about the best businesses in town for their personal and professional needs. Solicitors frequent the busy leasing offices in an effort to promote their latest and greatest to the sought-after demographic. Meanwhile, Mark-Taylor was losing time and money.

So, what does one of Arizona's largest apartment development companies do when it needs to provide a bigger, better amenity for its Internet-savvy residents?

## **Pursuit of Customer-Centric Services**

First, Mark-Taylor built a better website with interactive community and leasing tools, online rent payment, a community newsletter and as a result, won the best website award by the National Association of Home Builders. Then, they began a search engine marketing campaign to drive more traffic to their site.

Next, the search for a more intuitive online resource that would allow residents and prospects to find the best local businesses began. Knowing that every day, their leasing office staff acts as personal concierges' to the thousands of residents in need of local goods and services: "What's the best dry cleaner nearby?" "Where can I find a decent hair stylist?" "What's your favorite pizza joint in town?" Or, "What website should I use to find local information?"

## Solution: the Property Centric Search Solution

Keeping the needs of local small businesses in mind, Mark-Taylor wanted to allow reputable businesses to unobtrusively offer their products and services to interested residents. After all, searching online for local products and services is more commonplace than any other research method. The holistic solution presented itself when the company was introduced to the Property Centric custom local search platform, powered by Vortaloptics.

With their customer's active modern lifestyles, the information delivery product had to do more than a static phone book and take less time than a visit to a leasing office - it had to be online, personalized, and relevant - while attracting prospects, helping retain residents and producing revenue for the company.

"Our residents trust the Mark-Taylor brand to provide them with the best of everything. For the solution to be valuable, we needed to provide a unique amenity that addressed everyone's needs: residents, employees and local businesses," said Prima Walker, Director of Marketing & PR at Mark-Taylor.

## Search Connects Buyers with Local Sellers

Property management companies have the trust of an extremely valuable commodity: residents of local communities. This is where the "real users" are - the people looking for local products and services on a daily basis. Property management companies such as Mark-Taylor Residential, have an opportunity to provide a truly customized, relevant search experience to consumers seeking better outlets for their local searches.

## Lead, Attract, Retain & Profit

Property Centric designed the local search engine and marketing strategy to help Mark-Taylor to:

1. **Lead:** Genuinely enhances the Mark-Taylor brand image and helps them stay ahead of competitors
2. **Attract:** Unique amenity will drive more prospects to property websites and office locations which can increase new contracts
3. **Retain:** Improve the lives of residents and community members by providing trustworthy, always-on relevant local information, thereby building loyalty
4. **Profit:** By attracting new residents, providing a valuable amenity and selling search ads, Mark-Taylor has realized a new revenue source

## Defining a Search Strategy

Defining Mark-Taylor's search strategy was priority number one. Resident amenities are very important to their customer-centric firm, which strongly believes in an open dialogue between resident and company. Mark-Taylor has invested heavily in their online presence and electronic communications to foster an ongoing conversations on the customer's terms. The goal to make resident's lives easier was the driving force behind how their local search amenity was developed.

With locations in eight major cities within the widespread Phoenix valley, Property Centric devised an end user scenario that would make a local search for "dry cleaners" local for both Chandler residents (south end) and Scottsdale residents (north end). A drop-down box with the eight main cities fulfilled the objective of making "local" much more local.

Additionally, a [local directory](#) was developed that could guide the casual browser or help searchers clarify their search requests. [21 categories and 120 subcategories](#) were defined based on known and anticipated resident interests. The broad range of categories includes Accommodations, Entertainment, Government

Agencies, Professional & Lifestyle Services, Religion and Sports & Leisure, among others, with various subcategories populated beneath each category.

Once the categories had been identified, the task of populating the engine began. Property Centric' data entry team began filling the search results with relevant links: only businesses that had been subjected to human review, were in good standing in the community and had a useful website.

## Placement of the Search Engine

In real estate, it's all about location. For search, the same holds true. Mark-Taylor knew that residents frequent the "[Resident's Corner](#)" page on their site more than any other. This page contains online bill features, a maintenance request form, a referral program and a link to the award-winning 24-hour Concierge service. This page is an ideal spot to install the search box *and* a mini-directory (an offering of the top 12 categories). A relocation services section was added - offering one-click access to new movers' immediate needs.

However, visibility is also very important. For the best search engine optimization benefits, placement on the home page of a search box and link to the directory can dramatically increase searches and take advantage of search spiders, which look for relevant content 1-click away from the home page.

## Resident Awareness Campaign

Building awareness of the localized search engine was next priority. After all, the amenity's value would reveal itself when the "real users" - the local community dwellers and Mark-Taylor residents - would search and browse their way to better, faster answers.

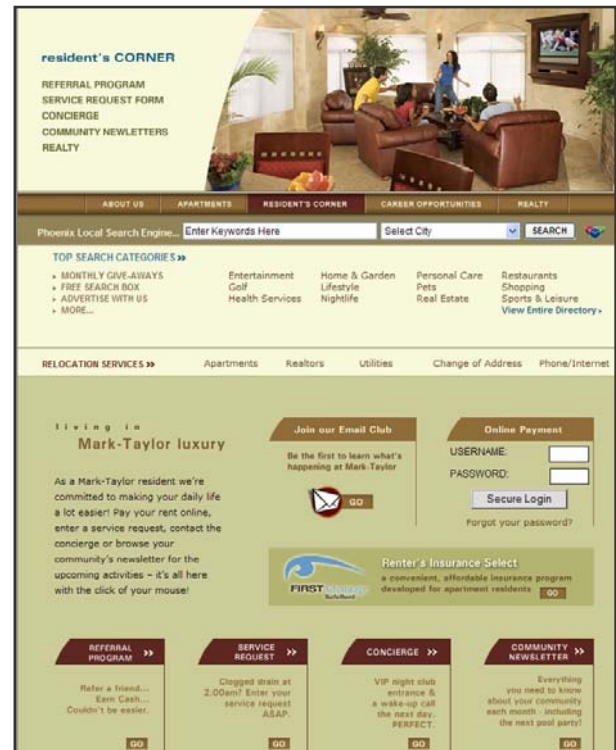
Collateral was developed for the leasing offices, newsletter announcements were made, press releases conducted, and doorhanger flyers blanketed every single apartment within the community. Leasing consultants were educated on the depth of information available in the search engine and happily, they immediately began referring residents to the better resource for information. Finally, Mark-Taylor employees could save time and provide more than just an opinion: residents could make the choice themselves about what company should earn their business that day for the product or service they were seeking.

## Advertiser Awareness and Internal Training

Every day, businesses approach Mark-Taylor for advertising opportunity: their affluent local demographic is a prime prospect for local businesses. A referral fax program was instituted internally so that leasing consultants could quickly staple a business card to a fax sheet and send it off to the outsourced Property Centric sales team for follow-up. With irritating neon flyers a thing of the past, the search engine became the #1 recommended and used resource for connecting local businesses to local residents. Awareness, greater efficiency and advertising dollars were quickly accomplished through a well-crafted search strategy.

## Prospect Conversions Improved

A Mark-Taylor leasing consultant wrote an unsolicited testimonial of her own, extolling the effectiveness of Mark-Taylor's web- and resident-centric online strategy. The story breaks in after having "sold" a new resident over the phone - just days before that prospect was scheduled to fly in from out of state to conduct a physical tour the property prior to a job transfer.



*“As for Stephanie, because of our website, she canceled her plane ticket and rented over the phone. She was able to fill out her application and then fax everything over to us.*

*“Stephanie also had no clue what was around in Chandler, so I directed her to our search engine as well. She was able to view the surrounding businesses and answer all of her Chandler questions. To me it’s not closing over the phone, it’s closing over the website...”*

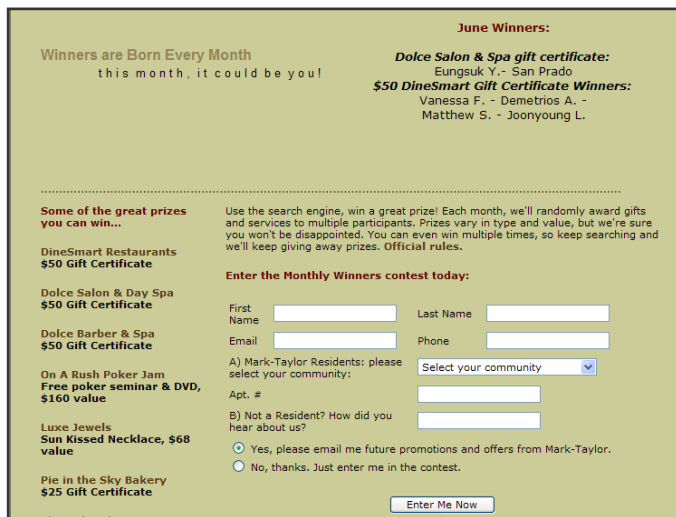
## Side Benefits of a Local Search Engine & Directory

For some companies, the potential side benefits of a custom-built local search engine and directory can be as productive as the inherent benefits of the tool itself. Let’s review how Mark-Taylor received additional brand exposure, search engine optimization improvements, search marketing savings and advertising revenue all from the Property Centric local search solution.

### Advertising Revenue

Mark-Taylor wanted an outsourced solution for advertising sales, so Property Centric stepped in as their part-time sales team. With some local media, and support amongst the 22 apartment properties, local businesses began finding out about the new local search engine. Advertising contracts for paid search placement and banner ads within the engine began coming in just a couple weeks after launch.

Positioning in the Mark-Taylor search page gives advertisers the direct link to the local customer they desperately seek. It also presents an inexpensive and no-hassle solution for bringing many locally-owned small businesses online. With a simple monthly placement fee, they can reach the Phoenix area through a well-known brand while at the same time, extend their online reach. The flat-fee pricing model harkens back to yellow pages advertising but provides much more functionality, reporting, flexibility and potential audience. In fact, many advertisers have seen their own website rankings increase due to their ad placements with Mark-Taylor. They’re receiving exposure locally and globally - through major search engines.



Another highly successful promotional outlet has been the [Monthly Winner’s promotion](#). Local businesses with search listings provide free barter items to Mark-Taylor for distribution to the lucky monthly winners.

With paid advertising contracts, which was accomplished without dedicated resources from Property Centric and very little involvement by Mark-Taylor employees, Mark-Taylor is not only offering a great amenity which has inherent value, it’s seeing revenue and gift incentives from local businesses on a monthly recurring basis.

Property Centric continues to act as the sales agent for Mark-Taylor, albeit in a very limited capacity due to an agreed upon schedule. Note that ad revenues could be increased significantly with even

part-time sales involvement by other property management companies wishing to reach out to local businesses with the search advertising opportunity. Recent studies show that small businesses are devoting more than half their advertising budgets to online advertising, but prefer flat-fee pricing models and a trusted relationship with sales agents - something that the Property Centric solution offers. Whether you

choose to outsource the sales to us, or have us train your in-house staff, we'll help you profit from your local search engine.

## Search Optimization Benefits

Mark-Taylor's local search engine was installed late July 2005. Immediately, [www.mark-taylor.com](http://www.mark-taylor.com) saw traffic and reach increases. In May 2005, before search engine installation, Mark-Taylor's traffic rank was approximately 518,000 (according to Alexa.com, a traffic ranking analysis system). Traffic rank represents the popularity of a site among the approximated 18 million sites online. It is a combined measure of page views and users (reach). The top 100,000 sites are where 45% of traffic conducts commerce online.

By September 2005, just six weeks after installation, Mark-Taylor.com's traffic rank was about 145,000th - a ranking increase of 373,000. By mid-December, their traffic rank broke the 100,000 mark and has fluctuated from around 95,000 to 145,000 consistently.

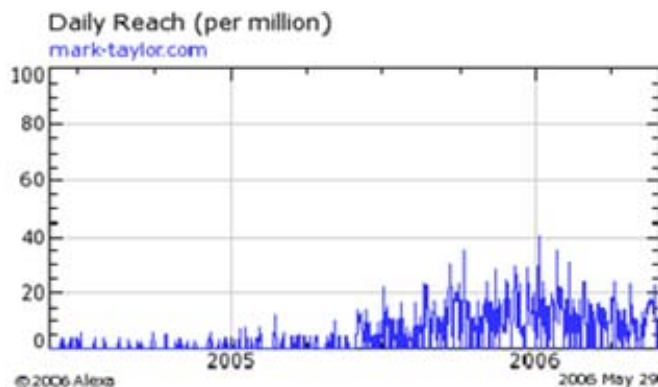
This traffic rank increase has occurred because the search engine and directory creates thousands of links to outside websites, significantly increasing the local content of Mark-Taylor's site and causing more people to visit and return to the site. As Mark-Taylor's online popularity increased, so its natural search engine rankings increased.

In fact, prior to search engine installation, when a user searched at a major search engine such as Google for the popular terms, "phoenix luxury apartments," they would have had a tough time locating Mark-Taylor's site: their listing was buried on about page 10 of the search results.

Now, when a user searches for "phoenix luxury apartments", the Mark-Taylor website regularly appears in the first result! And several of its apartment microsites appear on page 1 and 2 of the search results. Search for "phoenix apartments" or similar phrases and Mark-Taylor's site can usually be found on page 1 or 2 of the major search engine results (Google, Yahoo!, MSN).

As a result, a paid search campaign with Google was discontinued; after all, why pay for placement when your site already appears in the top 10 natural results?

Mark-Taylor is now in the top natural results positions without spending thousands a month in paid search campaigns. This is a significant success, considering that consistent natural search rankings can be difficult to achieve and expensive to optimize for. This improvement happened naturally as a result of the local search engine.



Alexa.com chart, showing increases in site traffic and reach for Mark-Taylor

## Benefit Summary

Prima Walker, Director of Marketing & PR of Mark-Taylor Residential, has seen firsthand the benefits of the paid and local search engine product that Property Centric has custom-built for her company.

“Repeat visits are on the rise and our natural search rankings have improved drastically. In fact, without any other search engine marketing efforts, the Property Centric search engine has helped Mark-Taylor.com appear on page one of natural search listings at Google for “phoenix luxury apartments” - a key phrase we used to spend thousands a month for with AdWords, and we’re consistently showing up on page two for “phoenix apartments.” Prior to installment of the search engine and its subsequent regular usage by thousands of Phoenix valley residents, [Mark-Taylor.com](http://Mark-Taylor.com) was usually on page 10 or more of Google’s natural listings. The Mark-Taylor brand is becoming more widely known in Phoenix and among the Internet community,” she said.

“Additionally, we are already seeing advertising income and barter goods from local businesses seeking guaranteed placement in the search engine. I am thrilled with Property Centric’ service and product. I highly recommend Property Centric as a business partner and search engine solutions provider.”

Return on investment for Mark-Taylor for the last 10 months has been healthy. Within the first few months, advertising contracts and barter items more than paid for the search engine licensing fees. Combine that with the benefit of consistently being in the top natural search results of Google without having to buy placement, and **Mark-Taylor has seen approximately a 280% return on investment.**

From concept to profitability took a few short months. Mark-Taylor aggressively moved into a space no other property management company had to date: a holistic local search amenity for their local residents. Property Centric delivered the tool and marketing program economically, on budget and on time.

## Next Steps

Phase 2 of building more value for Mark-Taylor includes launching an email campaign to begin a more holistic communication strategy with prospects, residents and opted-in monthly winner’s entrants. With very little promotion in the first half of 2006, total searches have increased 3-fold. As Property Centric continues to update the search results, general search rankings hold steady and Mark-Taylor continues to promote the local search resource, Mark-Taylor should continue to see significant traffic improvements, SEO benefits, resident value, easier prospect conversions, advertising and barter revenues and more.

## Everyone Wins: Residents, Staff, Local Businesses & the Property Management Company

- **Lead:** Build your brand and stay ahead of the curve through innovation
- **Attract:** Unique amenity will drive more prospects to property web sites and office locations which can increase new contracts
- **Retain:** Improve the lives of residents and community members by building loyalty
- **Profit:** Achieve monthly recurring revenues

Mark-Taylor’s experience is not unique. Your property management company can also reap the branding, marketing, resident and financial rewards from your own custom-built local search engine and directory. Please [contact us](#) for more information about vertical search engines and related services.

We make search a profitable endeavor for your property management business.

Property Centric provides custom built local search engines and online marketing strategies for the property management industry. Our results-focused products are centered on your goals: client acquisition and retention, brand building and ancillary profit generation.

Throughout the customer lifecycle, Property Centric gives your property management company a competitive advantage by helping you **win more residents, establish trust, retain residents and profit** - all from our local search engine and marketing services.



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