

Thornley Groves: “100% of our properties get the PropertyBOX treatment”

Supercharging engagement with intelligent marketing

At a glance

- Thornley Groves first started using PropertyBOX, the world's first floor plan and photo enhancing app, 9 months ago.
- Now, staff in all 9 branches use the software.
- From studio flats to mansions, beautiful photos & floor plans are a core aspect of the agency's brand.
- The PropertyBOX response rate is less than two hours.
- Today, 100% of Thornley Groves' homes get the PropertyBOX treatment.
- The number of revisits for photos is at an all-time low.
- The team has seen a 15-20% rise in average detailed views per property per day on Rightmove.

“Could I compare using PropertyBOX to having a professional photoshoot or subscription-based floor plan software? Absolutely. We run 100% of our properties through it and as a result, beautiful photos and floor plans have become a key USP during our valuations.”

Established in 1991 from a single estate agency branch in Altrincham, Thornley Groves now has 9 offices and employs over 120 staff.

Annually, it sells more than 1,000 properties, lets over 2,000 properties and manages in excess of 3,000 houses and apartments for landlords across North, South and Central Manchester.

Key requirements

With a patch that covers Manchester city centre right through to leafy Cheshire, estate agency Thornley Groves has a diverse range of properties.

Although that helps its Negotiators develop a rounded expertise, Residential Sales and Lettings Director Matt Smith also seeks uniformity when it comes to branding. Consistency is one of its main brand messages and has been key to its 750-sales-a-year success. Presenting some properties impeccably but leaving others without the professional touch simply isn't an option for Thornley Groves.

"Of course we get the £1,000,000+ mansions in places like Cheshire, and they come with the budget for a full professional shoot," says Smith. "But that's only one part of our business. We can't use professional photographers on every property. We've got plenty of two-bed apartments in the city centre, which deserve to be advertised with the same level of quality."

As floor plan and photo enhancements are such an integral part of the marketing package, it's become a USP the Negotiators use in the valuation process.

"We're not professional photographers. Just because you can take a selfie doesn't mean you can photograph a property well. Even using high-end photography equipment, it's hard to get the right lighting and perfect angles. We're really critical of photos across the board because they're such an integral part of our vendor's marketing package."

There's been a lot of industry discussion about high street agents competing with online agents, but Smith and his team are always developing - irrespective of competition. "We want to provide the best possible service, full stop. We've just started using online valuation provider ValPal, for instance. We're always testing out the latest software and PropTech to make our vendors' experience better."

"No other floor plan service provider we've used actually draws the plan for you. That's a huge help on a busy day."

Matt Smith,
Residential Sales Director,
Thornley Groves



Using PropertyBOX

"We've been using PropertyBOX for nine months now," says Matt. "I was the first user but it's now been adopted by my whole team. It's halfway towards using a professional photographer, without having the cost that comes with it."

PropertyBOX automatically straightens any verticals, adjusts exposure levels, and produces visibly sharper images. "I may be a relative novice compared to a professional, but you can see a huge difference in the image. Even when you think you've taken the perfect picture, the fine-tuning still offers a welcome improvement."

Removing small objects, like a wayward TV remote or tea towel, make the property look much more cared-for, according to Matt. "When a camera's viewfinder is small, it's easy to miss smaller items until you see it on the big screen. Being able to remove non-permanent objects like cups and waste bins saves us the time, money and effort we'd otherwise waste by taking a trip back to the property for a reshoot."

"Without stating the obvious, we love the blue skies. We're in Manchester, not Costa Del Sol at the end of the day. Blue skies are now completely ingrained in our marketing. You won't see any Thornley Groves property displayed in anything less than great weather now."

With a response rate that rarely goes beyond two hours, the Negotiators use the turnaround time to log the details of the property, write the description and polish the listings. In the background, PropertyBOX gets to work, enhancing the photos and drawing the floor plan.

He's seen a big difference when team members have been out of the office on holiday or with an illness. "No other floor plan service provider we've used actually draws the plan for you. That's a huge help on a busy day," says Matt.

Results

Today, 100% of Thornley Groves' homes get the PropertyBOX treatment. "We wouldn't list a property without it. It'd break our brand uniformity, and that's not something we want to do."

The number of revisits for photos has reached an all-time low. "We're not just saving time using efficient, automated software; we're saving time by scrapping revisits. Our employee happiness is so important to us. Anything that helps them, like getting rid of revisits, gives them a welcome boost."

The team judges its Rightmove successes not just on click-through-rates, but on average detailed views per property per day. It lumps all an agency's properties together and gives an overall impression of how the brand is doing, as opposed to the individual property. "Since using new software like PropertyBOX, we've seen a significant improvement – about a 15-20% boost – across the board. And it makes sense. If something's more attractive, you're more likely to click."

General operations at Thornley Groves have improved as well. "Think of it like this. You could technically operate a business without email, but why would you? Using PropertyBOX is kind of like that. It's an obvious choice, really."

"But let's be honest: it's not rocket science. It's simply exceptionally good software. We weren't suffering before we used it, but it's a real icing-on-the-cake offering. Plus: it makes our window displays look beautiful."

Matt finishes: "Could I compare it to a professional photoshoot or subscription-based floor plan software? Absolutely. If you use the proper equipment, know how to take a good photo and can sketch a nice floor plan, PropertyBOX helps you give off a pretty good impression of a pro."

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