

March/April 2001

Title NEWS

Official Publication of the American Land Title Association

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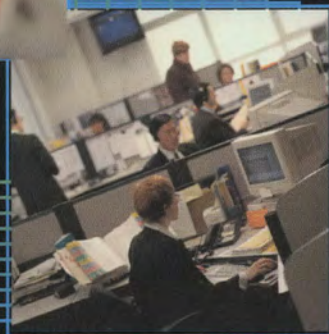
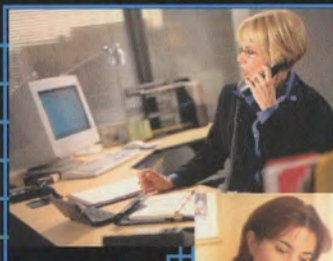
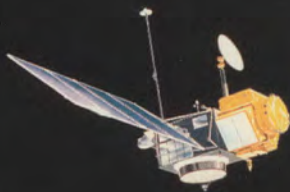
- Should We Market Directly to Consumers?
- Making Home Closings Smarter
- The Title Agent's Role in Outsourced Services
- Distance Education: The Title Industry's Future?
- ALTA Survey Reveals Value of Title Insurance
- Federal Conference Schedule

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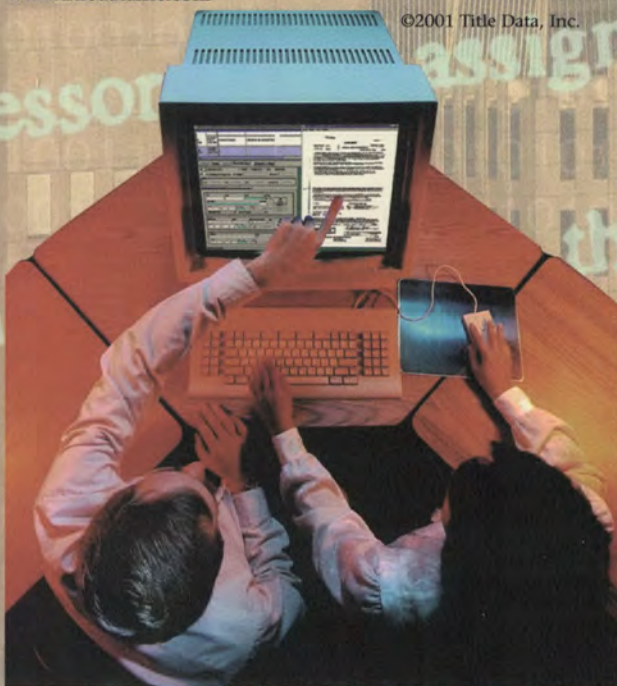


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Register by March 22, 2001, to save 15% on registration fees:

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2001 promises to be a year of new beginnings and, as always, change for the industry. Ensure your place at the ALTA 2001 Federal Conference.

Mark your calendar and watch your mail for registration information.

May/June 2001

Title NEWS

Official Publication of the American Land Title Association

BANDWIDTH CONNECTIONS

—◆—
WHICH IS BEST FOR YOU?

PLUS

- Is There Life After Refi?
- MERS: The Wave of the Future

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A LOT OF US CAN REMEMBER WHEN THE TITLE BUSINESS DIDN'T CHANGE MUCH. DECADE TO DECADE. BACK THEN YOU DID THINGS BY HAND BECAUSE THAT'S HOW THE JOB GOT DONE. TODAY, IF YOU'RE NOT KEEPING PACE WITH THE TIMES, YOU'RE FALLING BEHIND. FEW COMPANIES HAVE CHANGED AS MUCH AS WE HAVE. NEW TECHNOLOGY, NEW OWNERSHIP, EVEN A NEW BUSINESS MODEL. WE HELP TITLE COMPANIES CHANGE BY INTRODUCING NEW TECHNOLOGIES AND BY CREATING SYSTEMS THAT ENABLE THEM TO DEVELOP THEIR OWN RELIABLE, EFFICIENT AND COMPETITIVE ORDER PROCESSING AND TITLE PRODUCTION CAPABILITIES. LOCALLY, REGIONALLY AND NATIONALLY. WHAT'S NEXT?

the **BIG** build upward

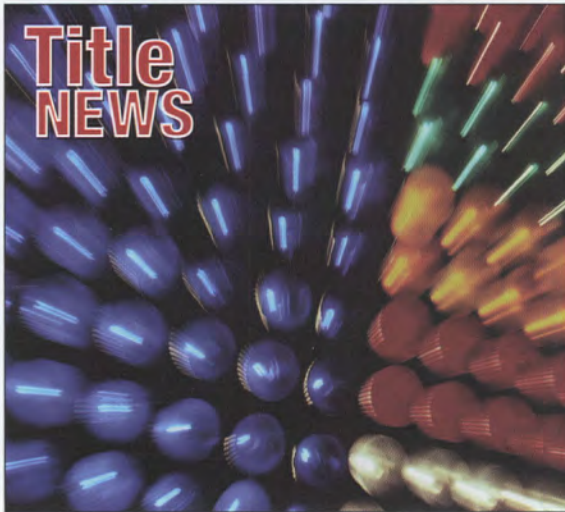
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Leading Edge

by Cara Detring

It is important to ALTA to keep members informed. ALTA wants to be the messenger, even if the news is not popular. After all, who do you want to learn from, someone you know and trust, like ALTA, or your competition? We want you to know what is going on before it happens in your market. We want you to have a voice and to influence change. This Leading Edge column asks you to be open to the messages—just don't shoot the messenger!

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Running Your Business

Is There Life After Refi?

by Darryl Turner

The recent refinance boom has provided the title industry with much needed business. But what are your plans when the boom dies down? How will you obtain new business? Will you be doing the important things, or the urgent things? Learn the difference, and three rules to live by, when it comes to building a strong stable business environment.

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The Wave of the Future

by Dan McLaughlin

Are you taking advantage of this new member benefit? ALTA has partnered with MERS and EDS, our technology partner, to provide MERS Link, specifically for the title industry. The browser-based MERS Link allows settlement agents to quickly determine the correct current servicer of loans registered on the MERS system. Today the system tracks more than 4 million registered loans and about 9,500 loans are registered on the system daily. Learn how easy it is to use and how it will save you time, paperwork and money.

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Cover Story

Bandwidth Connections— Which is Best for You?

by John Williams

Imagine running a business without phone service, a fax, or copy machine. In the not too distant future, companies without reliable, fast access to the Internet will not be able to effectively compete. This article, an excerpt from a popular session at ALTA's Tech Forum, will examine the different Broadband connections and their pros and cons. A basic Broadband 101. You can decide which best suits your needs.

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Don't Shoot the Messenger!

With spring comes the start of state convention season. The officers, board members, and members of the staff attend the state conventions to provide a connection between the state associations and ALTA. The Board wants to build very strong relationships and provide the link between local title people and the title industry on the national level. The message that we bring includes an update "from the Hill," encouragement to get involved with ALTA and your own state organization, and the current trends in the title industry. The current trends portion of the message provokes the most interesting and the most controversial discussions.

Like many of you, I was taught the title business under "the old school." As an independent title agent, I personally am somewhat overwhelmed and threatened by many of the current trends. As your ALTA President, it is my responsibility and the responsibility of other ALTA representatives who attend your conventions, to bring you news of what is happening now. And that news is what may cause you to want to "shoot the messenger."

Information is Key

Opening ALTA's doors, as Frank Willey explained in the last issue of Title News—to alliances, affiliated business arrangements, vendor management companies, e-commerce, e-closings, product development, and changing competition—is all part of the message. Providing information does not mean advocating it. Information is one of the keys to survival in the title industry. Information is one of the keys to making good decisions. Information is one of the keys to success. Don't shoot the messenger just because you don't like the message.

Be Informed

It is important to ALTA to keep members informed. ALTA wants to be the messenger, even if the news is not popular. After all, who do you want to learn from, someone you know and trust, like ALTA, or your competition? We want you to know what is going on *before* it happens in your market. We want you to have a voice and to *influence* change. We want you to be able to *plan* and to turn change and challenges into opportunities. We want to utilize every resource that we can to help you to be *successful*.

The Board, officers, and ALTA staff are looking forward to your conventions and to bringing you the message—just don't shoot the messenger.

Cara L. Detring



ALTA Debuts Keys to Success Series

This July, ALTA and its educational subsidiary, the Land Title Institute, will launch the first seminar in the "Keys to Success Series." The Series, designed to help title professionals succeed in their businesses, will feature stand-alone education seminars specifically for the title industry. The first seminar, **How to Use Technology for Effective Marketing**, will be offered July 23-24 at the Bellagio in Las Vegas.

How to Use Technology for Effective Marketing will feature several sessions including: Creating a Marketing Plan; Improving Customer Communications via E-mail; Promoting your Web Page; and Maximizing the Use of your Personal Digital Assistant. (Participants will receive hands-on training with a PDA and have the opportunity to purchase one.)

Registration fee includes 1½ days of sessions, 2 continental breakfasts, and one luncheon. The fee for members prior to June 22 is \$299, for nonmembers, \$379. After June 22, add \$50 to the fee. Hotel room rates are \$159/night, plus tax. Airline discounts are available through Delta, 1-800-241-6760. Reference file #168524A.

For more information on the seminar, call or e-mail us for a full brochure at 1-800-787-2582 or service@alta.org. To register online, go to www.alta.org

Look for information on the next Keys to Success seminar in a future issue of *Title News*.



More News

For up to the minute news, visit the newly designed ALTA Web site at www.alta.org. There are stories on the home page and under Industry News, and Government Action.

calendar

ALTA Coming Events

May

5-8
Internal Auditors Meeting
Key West, FL

16

ALTA Board Meeting
Colorado Springs, CO

18

Nominating Committee Meeting
Colorado Springs, CO

June

2-4
TRC Board Meeting
New York, NY

20-22

Education Committee Meeting
Santa Fe, NM

24-26

Large Agents Meeting
Novi, MI

24-26

Systems Committee Meeting
Boston, MA

July

23-24
Marketing Seminar
Las Vegas, NV

August

19-21
Reinsurance Committee Meeting
North Falmouth, MA

27

Research Committee Meeting
Annapolis, MD

September

29 - Oct. 2
Annual Accountants Meeting
New York, NY

October

10-13
ALTA Annual Convention
Palm Desert, CA

November

4-6
Title Counsel Meeting
New Orleans, LA

19

TRC Board Meeting
San Francisco, CA

Affiliated Association Conventions

February

15-17 Alaska

April

4-6 Tennessee

May

3-6 Palmetto

4-6 Oklahoma

6-8 Iowa

9-11 California

10-12 New Mexico

June

3-5 New Jersey

3-5 Pennsylvania

3-5 Virginia

7-8 South Dakota

7-9 Texas

21-23 Arkansas

21-24 New England

24-26 Oregon

July

13-14 Illinois

19-21 Utah

21-24 Michigan

Twenty-Five Graduate from Management Development Program

Twenty-five title industry executives graduated from the Management Development Program, February 25-March 2 in Houston. The week-long program is offered by the Land Title Institute, ALTA's educational arm. It is designed to teach the newest management and leadership techniques specifically for the title industry. Course topics include: Principles of Managing; Leadership Skills; Human Resources Management; Finance for Land Title Managers; Communication/Listening Skills; Marketing Strategies for the Title Industry, Customer Service, and Managing Change.



During the Finance for Land Title Managers course, the class was divided into small working groups to complete a newly developed finance game for the program.



During an activity in the Communications/Listening Skills course, the group learned the importance of listening and communicating clearly to achieve their goal.

ALTA and Sixteen Real Estate Associations Sponsor Meeting

ALTA is joining with sixteen other real estate associations as partners in a single industry conference—Realcomm 2001, the largest conference focused exclusively on technology solutions and e-commerce for the commercial real estate industry.

Up to 4,000 professionals in commercial real estate and technology are expected to attend the third annual Realcomm event, June 14-15 in Dallas.

As part of its participation, ALTA is sponsoring a session on the adoption of technology by title and settlement services professionals. The session, scheduled from 12:00 noon - 1:00 p.m. on Friday, June 15, will feature Rob Chapman, CIO of Old Republic National Title. Rob will also serve as an ALTA advisor to the conference.

ALTA members can register and will receive \$100 off the registration fee. For more information and to register online, visit www.realcomm.com

Make Your Plans for Palm Desert

ALTA's Annual Convention is scheduled for October 10-13, at Marriott's Desert Springs Resort in Palm Desert, CA. This year's theme, Boundless Opportunities: Where Will you Be When Opportunity Knocks? promises to offer attendees the opportunity to look to the future of the industry and see where they fit in. Look for registration information in the mail in June.

Affiliated Association Conventions, cont.

August

2-4	Kansas
2-5	Montana
9-11	North Carolina
10-12	Minnesota
15-18	Idaho
19-22	New York

September

6-8	Dixie
6-8	Wyoming
6-9	Washington
9-11	Ohio
12-14	Nebraska
12-15	Colorado
14-16	Wisconsin
21-23	Missouri
TBD	Nevada
TBD	Indiana
TBD	Maryland

November

7-10	Arizona
7-10	Florida

December

6-7	Louisiana
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government & agency news

Update on ALTA Issues

RESPA Reform

Ann vom Eigen, ALTA's legislative and regulatory counsel, spoke with Senate Banking Chairman Phil Gramm (R-TX) last month about the timing of the RESPA issue. At that point, he indicated that he thought the Committee might consider the issue next year. House Financial Services Committee Chairman Mike Oxley (R-OH), has recently put oversight of RESPA on the agenda for this year, although it may be late spring or early summer before work begins. At this point, the new administration has few people in place to formalize positions. However, the Mortgage Bankers Association of America, the Mortgage Brokers Association, and the Consumer Mortgage Coalition seem to be making efforts to develop a consensus position.

Enforcement

Ivy M. Jackson has been named the Acting Director of the Interstate Land Sales/RESPA Division of the Office of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs at the Department of Housing and Urban Development. Rebecca Holtz, formerly head of that office, has now been transferred to the enforcement division in HUD. In the last few months of the Clinton Administration, the Secretary had proposed a new RESPA Enforcement Division. Changes such as this now appear to be on hold with the Bush Administration hiring freeze. In addition, as the new Administration has few policy level appointees, such as the FHA Commissioner and General Counsel confirmed, decisions may be delayed until appointments are made. Peter Race, the RESPA enforcement counsel, remains, for now at least, in the Office of the General Counsel. Ken Markinson, Assistant General Counsel GSE/RESPA Division, remains in charge of RESPA Regulatory issues.

Privacy

ALTA had several successes in lobbying the Federal Trade Commission on this issue. (All "nonbank financial institutions, including title companies fall under the auspices of the FTC.) As a result of a series of meetings with the ALTA Government Affairs Committee, staff follow-up meetings, and comments

submitted to the FTC, the FTC regulations specifically recognize that "customer relationships" with members of the real estate settlement services industry effectively terminate after the real estate settlement service has been completed. Thus, we are relieved of providing annual privacy notices to customers who hold our title insurance policies. Second, the definition of "nonpublic personal information" included in the FTC and Federal bank regulator regulations exclude "publicly available information." The term "publicly available information" specifically covers real estate records. This definition should help to exempt many title insurers and agents from providing "opt-out" notices before they share information. Third, both the FTC and the financial institution regulations include several provisions that help minimize the burden on companies seeking to comply. In addition, the National Association of Insurance Commissioners model legislation on privacy relieves settlement service providers of the annual notice requirement.

Rep. Mike Oxley (R-OH), current chair of the House Financial Services Committee, has indicated that action on the issue of privacy will not move forward this year.

"Middleman Regulations"

The IRS has finally issued proposed Middleman regulations that describe information reporting requirements (Form 1099-Misc) on disbursements by middlemen. The regulations contained several relevant examples, including one which concerned ALTA. It describes a situation in which a settlement agent is not required to report because they (1) do not perform management or oversight function, and (2) do not have a significant economic interest in the payments. ALTA's concern was the "significant economic interest" standard. Kevin Kelly, vice president, tax, for LandAmerica, will be working on this issue as the title industry representative on the Internal Revenue Service Information Reporting Program Advisory Committee (IRPAC) That committee, composed of private individuals in a variety of business sectors advises the IRS on the potential effect of proposed IRS actions. They are drafting a paper on this issue, and it will include a clarification of "settlement agent" for the middleman regulations.

NAIC Questions Creditors' Rights Coverage

In November 2000, the California Insurance Department raised a number of questions concerning title companies removing the creditors' rights exclusion from the 1992 policy or issuing the 1970 policy at the request of commercial customers. Mr. Girion, chief of the Financial Analysis Division of the California Department, indicated that the Department's examination of the financial condition of title insurers revealed that the risk of deleting the creditors' rights exclusion did "not appear to be included in the range of risks for which title companies carry case or statutory reserves nor is it included in the computation of IBNR." Mr. Girion also indicated that these risks do not appear to be included in the determination of premiums to be charged for commercial risks. Finally, he indicated that notwithstanding the above, the issue is whether creditors' rights coverage is in fact title insurance, and if not, it is a violation of monoline provisions of the insurance code.

The California Department has brought this matter before the NAIC Special Insurance Issues G Committee for consideration. A Creditors' Rights in Title Insurance Working Group has been formed and had its' first meeting on March 27th at the NAIC Convention in Nashville.

During the meeting Mr. Girion reiterated the above points and received commentary, on the nature of the coverage and the underwriting that goes into removing the exclusion. Mr. Girion then asked that the industry respond with a definition of what title insurance is and is not, and an explanation of creditors' rights coverage to include reserving and pricing issues if it is title insurance. ALTA indicated that we would respond within a month.

Rich McCarthy, ALTA's director of research, has written to the members of the ALTA Forms Committee asking for their individual positions on this issue. ALTA will convene a conference call with the Forms Committee to determine if there is a consensus position. Mr. Girion will have a conference call with his Working Group and interested parties in May. If you wish to be included in the interested parties list, please contact Ed Dinkel at the NAIC at edinkel@naic.org.

Rep. Baker Introduces GSE Legislation

U.S. Rep. Richard Baker (R-LA) has introduced legislation to enhance regulatory oversight of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac.

Central to the "Secondary Mortgage Market Enterprises Regulatory Improvement Act" (H.R. 1409), is the transfer of regulatory authority over Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac to the Federal Reserve Board. The bill would also bolster supervision by providing the Board with more bank-regulator-like enforcement powers consistent with the task of monitoring safety and soundness of the federally chartered mortgage finance agencies.

Because of the two companies' history as government-sponsored-enterprises, there exists, as Fed Chairman Alan Greenspan has stated, "a presumption by market traders that in the event of default the GSE's liabilities, notwithstanding current law, would...be the guaranteed by the federal government." While Baker has praised recent voluntary initiatives by Fannie and Freddie to enhance disclosure and risk management, he acknowledges that they did little to address the overarching reality of a market-perceived "implicit guarantee" whereby American taxpayers would still be expected to bear this massive obligation should the GSEs ever fail.

The legislation also includes a provision that attempts to address so-called "Mission creep," the companies' efforts to engage in "new activities" outside their

charter focus of establishing a secondary market for housing loans. The definition of "new activity" and review process included in the Baker bill are unlikely to affect the title industry, given the regulated nature of our product and the current service delivery system.

Baker indicated that he will hold hearings on the issue, possibly beginning May 1. For more information, go to the "News from Washington" section of the Government Action Web page and click on the April 5 article.

House Passes Small Business Checking Bill

The House passed H.R. 974, the "Small Business Checking Act of 2001," which may have a significant financial impact on the way title companies and agencies manage funds. The bill would allow small banks to pay interest on business checking two years after the date of enactment.

The bill has passed the U.S. House of Representatives. The timing of subsequent Senate action is uncertain. ALTA will keep you posted on its progress. To see the entire bill, go to the ALTA Government Action page and click on "Issues", then "Interest on Business Checking." Details: Ann vom Eigen, ALTA legislative and regulatory counsel, 1-800-787-ATLA or ann_vomeigen@alta.org.

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Express Order Entry... Ctrl+E

Open... Ctrl+O

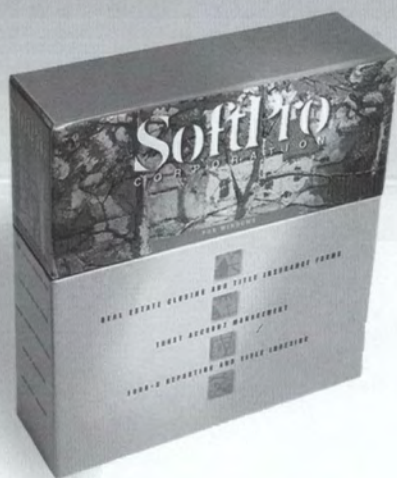
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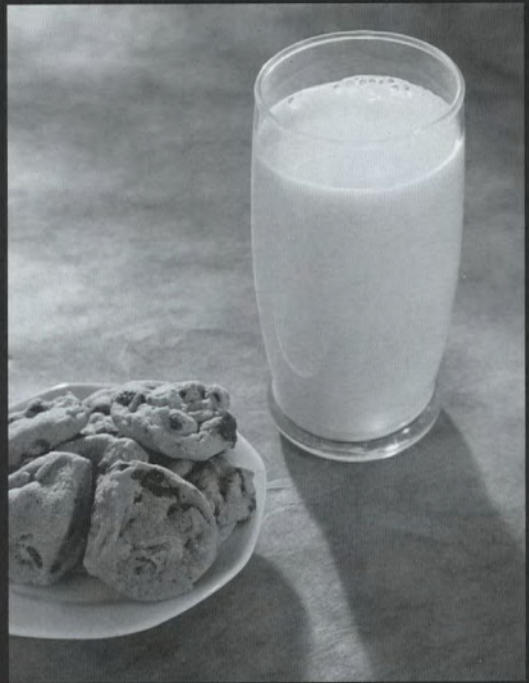
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Bandwidth Connections— Which is Best for You?

by John Williams

Imagine running a business without electricity or phone service, without a fax or a copy machine. It would be virtually impossible. Broadband connectivity is the next basic business utility coming down the pike. In the not-too-distant future, companies without reliable, flexible broadband Internet access will not be able to effectively compete, no matter what the industry.

Today, broadband is making business better. Not everyone has it, so those companies that do have an advantage over those that don't. Soon, however, broadband will be a universal standard that raises the playing field to another level. If you don't have it, you won't get in the game.

Basic Working Knowledge

The most common benefit of broadband connectivity is a fast Internet connection. The Internet however is not just for surfing the net. With more companies developing extranets, a fast Internet connection can be more important than ever. By connecting multiple locations together you can keep from reinventing the wheel. The ability to share your data and applications is obvious, however there are also benefits in communication between the offices via e-mail, fax, and voice. And if your offices are in different area

codes, the benefits can be even greater since you might eliminate long distance charges.

Bring on the Bandwidth

Everyone wants a fast connection and the reasons are obvious. Broadband Internet service in many cases is "always-on," meaning you don't have to dial in to your ISP's server and wait for a connection (and potentially not get one during peak times). Just launch your browser and you're connected.

But the real allure for many is the speed. While the maximum Kbps (kilobits per second) for dial-up Internet service is 53.3 Kbps, cable and DSL connections generally deliver an average minimum of around 150 Kbps (kilobits per second) and an average maximum of around 1 Mbps (megabit per second) for cable and 2 Mbps for DSL. The extra speed not only makes downloading Web page seemingly instant, but it also enables subscribers to use the Web for things that are impractical over a regular phone connection such as: streaming audio and video, virtual private networks (VPNs), extranets, and more. Broadband's fat pipe also makes it practical for a small business or home user to share a single connection and ISP (Internet Service Provider) account among several PCs—a prospect that would



bring a dial-up connection to its knees.

How Much Bandwidth Do You Need?

A general rule of thumb is to get as much as you can afford, because you can never have too much. And, you'll find that once you have a fast broadband connection you'll soon discover that you can do more than you ever thought. Does this mean up should order a T3 line for an office with four people? Absolutely not. Hopefully with the information provided here, you'll be able to make an informed decision about which broadband option best suits your needs.

The more users you have, the more bandwidth you'll need. But, you also need to look at what the users are doing with the connection. Twenty users that just access e-mail could use as much bandwidth as five that only access a database. Are you going to connect multiple offices? What will you need to do between the offices,

share applications and data? Do you need Internet access? This is where things can get a little complicated. Let's say you have five offices. You won't need five Internet connections—like you might with a traditional dial-up—you can share one connection through the WAN connections to all the offices. Will you have remote users and do these users need to access? Do you have or a need for a virtual private network?

Can We Get It?

While a majority of people would switch to broadband service tomorrow given the chance, the unhappy truth is that most U.S. homes and businesses don't have that choice. What's the holdup? Simply put, DSL and cable-modem service suppliers need time and money to upgrade the infrastructure as required by broadband.

The copper loops that connect most American households to local

and for those in rural areas that may never get wired broadband service—there are alternatives. What follows is a brief overview of the types of connections available. Keep in mind that all of these services may not be available in your location today but might be in the future.

DSL

Phone lines—not just for voice anymore .

Although ISDN has been delivering digital data services over standard phone lines for years, it is DSL (digital subscriber line) that gives your phone line superman-like power. DSL boasts faster connection times, higher throughput, easier installation, and cheaper subscription costs. DSL is a fairly simple technology, however it can be one of the most confusing. There are as many variations of DSL as there are types of coffees available at Starbucks:

DSL (Digital Subscriber Line) is

available in both upstream and downstream directions. It runs over two twisted pairs.

SDSL (Single line DSL) is similar to HDSL, however it runs on a single twisted pair.

RADSL (Rate-Adaptive DSL) is an ADSL technology with software able to determine the rate at which signals can be transmitted on a given customer phone line, and adjust the delivery rate accordingly.

It's often not a matter of what type of service you want more what is available to you

Often, it's not a matter of what type of service you want, but rather what is available to you.

When shopping for DSL service, it is advisable to first contact your local telephone provider to ask if DSL is available in your location. You may ask, why contact my local phone company when I've seen lower rates available from other providers? The answer is simple: no matter who you contract with for your DSL, your service will still run through your local phone provider. So contrary to what you may read in advertising, if your local phone company can't provide service, chances that a third-party vendor won't be able to either. Limited availability is the major downside of DSL.

There are a few hurdles that you must cross before you can choose DSL. First, if you are in a newer area that is wired with fiber optic cables, you are out of luck, since DSL only works on copper loop lines at this time. Second, you must be no further than 15,000 feet from the central office. Much further, and the quality of the line degrades to a point that it is not usable and most Telco's will not install beyond

Today, broadband is making business better. Not everyone has it, so those companies that do have an advantage over those that don't.

telephone central office switches were not designed for data traffic, particularly high-speed data traffic. But the electronics that enhance voice communication are murder on data transmission.

Cable service providers are also having a difficult time. The cable infrastructure was designed for one-way television programming communications—from the programmers to the consumer. Internet communications require two-way service.

For those not inclined to wait—

another method of high-speed data transfer over ordinary copper telephone lines. xDSL refers to different variations of DSL, such as ADSL, HDSL, SDSL, and RADSL.

ADSL (Asymmetric DSL) is the "asymmetric" form of DSL. It is called asymmetric since most of its two-way bandwidth is devoted to the downstream direction, sending data to the user.

HDSL (High bit-rate DSL) is a symmetrical DSL type, where an equal amount of bandwidth is

this point. There are new technologies and switch upgrades that Telco's are experimenting with everyday so if DSL is not available today, it could be soon.

Cable

A fast Internet connection.

Cable is probably the most widely known form of Broadband access. It's fast, simple, widely available, and cheap. However, it is currently not available for business use in most areas. Because cable was originally intended as a consumer television service, it's available in residential areas, but often not in downtown areas or commercial zones. With so many residential customers waiting for relatively simple installations, cable operators are reluctant to spend money running additional wires to office parks. This has forced many small and medium-size businesses to subscribe to DSL service, since all office buildings are wired for phone service. Of course, if an office already has cable jacks, the cable operator will probably be able to provide Internet service. However, businesses will have the same terms and conditions offered to residential users: they won't be allowed to host high-traffic Web sites over their cable connections.

If cable is an available option for you, there are a few things you need to know. On the plus side, you'll find a wide variety of manufacturers waiting to provide you with the hardware you need at very affordable prices. On the down side however, cable is probably the most dangerous type of connection. The nature of cable broadband has all users connected by, what in simple terms is, a big party line.

The shared nature of the cable

service, in which each 27-Mbps connection serves multiple locations in a node, has also come under fire. The more people on a node, the slower each connection could be. Unfortunately, subscribers have no way of knowing how many people are on the node, so it's impossible to know before subscribing what kind of service to expect. This may change as the new DOCSIS Version 1.1 modems roll out later this year.

While initial activity in cable modems is in the consumer market, business users are not being overlooked by cable companies. Many of these cable services are not the traditional, coaxial cable services but rather fiber-optic cables, which make up the backbone of the cable provider's network. Providers typically connect businesses directly into the backbone of the network without the intermediate step of a cable modem.

Satellite

The only choice for remote locales?

For the vast majority of Internet users in the U.S., all the talk about high-speed cable and DSL connectivity is just that: talk. It will take the better part of a decade for such service to be available to a majority of U.S. homes and businesses, and many rural communities may never be wired for broadband.

Another alternative is Satellite Internet Service. The ranks of satellite broadband users are expected to increase over the next few years. And that's despite the fact that satellite is hardly a perfect solution.

Satellite is probably the least understood and most complex

service available. However, it is a fast and economical access when you only need a connection to the Internet, and a T1 line is your last option. Satellite provides throughput (data transmission) at speeds equal to cable or DSL without the headaches of dealing with your local Telco or cable company.

That being said, one might ask if satellite is as fast and cheap as the other technologies, why not use it? The biggest single reason is the unpredictability of the weather. If you live in an area that is prone to heavy rain, wind or snow, you could go without service until the weather clears. And, you must have a clear line of site for the antenna. Last, but not least, is the delay time. Your data will be well traveled as it covers over 45,000 miles round trip, which could mean delays on average of 0.7 seconds. If you require voice-over IP, video-conferencing or other types of multimedia applications, this may not be the best solution for you.

The best-known satellite Internet player is four-year-old Hughes Network Systems, which has approximately 200,000 subscribers for its DirecPC service. Hughes' design is known as the "fast-download" model—when you access the Web, your data request is sent to Hughes' Maryland network operations center over a phone line. Responses from Web sites return to your desktop via the satellite connection. Thus, you need both the 18-inch DirecPC dish and a traditional dial-up line. This approach delivers great streaming audio and video and allows fast (400-Kbps) file downloads. But, page requests are routed the old-fashioned way, so surfing Web sites

doesn't feel that much quicker than on a standard dial-up connection.

Wireless Local Loop

Airwave connectivity comes at a premium price.

Wireless local loop (WLL) is David's slingshot in a world of Goliaths, to take on some of the biggest telecommunications companies—and much better known technologies like cable and DSL.

WLL is different from and simpler than mobile wireless, because it doesn't utilize client devices moving in and out of coverage areas. If you haven't heard of WLL, you're not alone. Currently, there are fewer than 200,000 subscribers in the U.S. Like satellite, WLL (also known as fixed-point wireless) is offered primarily to businesses and homes in areas where the infrastructure is not in place to deliver broadband via DSL or cable.

WLL providers say they have an edge over the larger and often

WLL, by contrast, doesn't require such extensive rebuilding. The service provider's central office is connected to the Internet through a leased line. Data is converted to wireless signals and relayed to customers (using the unlicensed 2.4-GHz radio band) via a network of transceivers (called micro cells) mounted on utility poles, streetlights, and the like. A service provider can cover dozens of square miles this way, with an infrastructure investment that is relatively minor by broadband standards.

Each WLL subscriber has a small radio receiver (about the size of a paperback book) and directional antenna pointed toward the nearest micro cell, which can be as far as five miles away. The receiver has an Ethernet connection that plugs into a LAN or a single PC. People can connect as many devices to the LAN as they want, and they can plug in any of the popular firewalls and routers sold for cable or DSL modems.

the largest potential competitors in the WLL space are introducing service in areas already covered by one of the wired broadband options.

Among U.S. business customers, WLL may not be the first choice for broadband connectivity because of the price premium. But, if your only other choice is no broadband at all, WLL may look much more attractive.

T1, ISDN

Once the fastest connections, don't write them off just yet.

T1 technology and ISDN are old standbys that have remained high on the list of broadband options. Here's the latest on these still-viable alternatives for businesses.

In a time when cable modem and satellite links often deliver 900 Kbps downstream, a 1.544-Mbps T1 Web connection isn't as impressive as it once was. Consider however, that this bandwidth is for both uploading and downloading, and that one of the main advantages is that providers can guarantee 24-hour 7-day two-way service and live up to promises of minimum speed.

The costs of T1 vary wildly, depending on the location and the competition, but in any case, its reliability comes at a premium. In a city with many competitive local carriers, you might get T1 service for a few hundred dollars a month. In rural areas, a T1 subscription could cost a thousand dollars per month or more.

T1-class leased lines can be used to connect organizations to the Internet or create a private intranet. If you lease T1-class services between your business locations,

How much bandwidth do you need? A general rule of thumb is to get as much as you can afford, because you can never have too much.

slower-moving broadband players, since they do not need to rely on third-party providers to complete the service. This is because deploying WLL is easier than rolling out cable or DSL service. Upgrading a geographic area to support wired broadband services requires a huge investment of money and labor for converting cable service to two-way transmission or, in the case of DSL, installing the proper central-office equipment.

WLL has advantages over satellite broadband because of its lower transmission delay. Price, however, is another matter. WLL costs considerably more per month than cable or DSL. A typical contract can run more than \$100 a month for 1-Mbps service. On top of that, customers have to purchase the receiver and antenna, which can cost \$1,500 or more, including the initial installation.

As WLL proliferates, equipment prices should fall. Thus, some of

you have total control and guaranteed privacy.

There are many twists on T1-class digital services. Those who require more or less bandwidth can lease multiples or fractions of a T1 line, depending on their needs. T2 provides 6.3 Mbps, and T3 goes to 44.7 Mbps. Fractional services offer lesser but still guaranteed bandwidth. Called burstable services, they guarantee a certain fraction of a T1 connection but can reach higher peaks. And many ISPs resell copper or fiber cable T1 connections provided by local carriers, marrying capacity with the content and other services ISPs provide. Note, however, that you can sometimes get a better rate negotiating the ISP and circuit from separate services.

Ordering and installing the connection is the trickiest part of any T1 relationship. The circuit contract typically does not include the router or other equipment needed to integrate the circuit with a local network. But if it does, you can rent the router from your ISP and pay the ISP to install and manage it. More convenient yes, but also more expensive.

ISDN

Integrated Services Digital Network (ISDN) is a transmission method that predates both cable modems and DSL but has never fulfilled its promise as a universal digital connection utility. Still, ISDN may be the only high-bandwidth service available to people in some rural areas.

Basic-rate ISDN's two 64-Kbps channels and software can be combined into one 128-Kbps path or left as two to allow voice and data streams simultaneously. ISDN

can handle longer copper local loops than DSL, but it requires more complex programming at the central office.

Yet while ISDN is slow compared with other broadband services and has a reputation for being difficult to set up, it can get expensive. The two benefits of ISDN are unshared, constant throughput and the ability to do complex switching and handling of digital voice calls for PBX business telephone systems.

Broadband, What does the future hold?

Confused? Don't feel bad. Broadband service can be one of the most confusing computer related things you'll ever have to deal with. We're stuck in the midst of a broadband evolution wrought with imperfections that taint the high-speed experience for many users, but don't give up if you have a bad first experience. The good news is that today's trials and

tribulations will eventually get us to a true "always-on" future where ultra fast Internet connections will be as accessible and common as today's telephone service.

The future may show a very different picture, however, when it comes to how and where we get broadband access. Cable and DSL, for example, may fall by the wayside as fiber-optic networks proliferate—something many industry watchers believe will happen within the next ten years.

Weigh your options carefully. It might be a bumpy ride, but well worth the aggravation. So boot up, strap in, and hold on—the days of taking a break while you wait for your connection are over.

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ALTA Tech Forum 2002

Broadband was just one of the many technology topics featured during the ALTA Tech Forum. Plan to attend next year, February 17-19 in Las Vegas.

Is There Life After Refi?

by Darryl Turner

Zig Ziglar once said that the definition of insanity is to do the same thing today that we did yesterday and to somehow expect different results. Based on that one statement alone, it is apparent that we all have moments, hours, and even days of insanity.

In the past few weeks, I have spoken to more than two hundred escrow closers and salespeople. The one thing they have in common is they are so busy closing refinance-driven transactions that they struggle to keep their head above water.

When we get busy, we are magnetically pulled to the side of business that can be very detrimental, the side of reactivity. There are two categories of operation and two types of issues we work on—the things that are important and the things that are urgent. First, let's look at the difference.

When it comes to important things, it is imperative that we not make a common mistake. It is critical that we don't look at urgent things and classify them as important. Important things are primarily based on future growth. They are based on real estate agent-driven business. Important things require us to be proactive in order to accomplish them.

While speaking to a group last

week, I asked them to give me a list of important things that they do every day. They proceeded to do something that was entirely predictable, give me a list of the urgent things they do. The items listed were reactionary and not proactive. The list included tasks such as returning phone calls, returning e-mails, and so on. Although necessary, these are reacting to a request from the client. Future business will be attained by our ability to keep the clients updated proactively and not just in how well we react to their call.

Many people get confused when it comes to this method. They feel that what a client wants is a timely returned phone call when they leave a message. In essence, what they are looking for is a title company that communicates with them first and updates them so they don't need to call.

While the important things are growth and future-oriented, the urgent things are survival and today-oriented. They cause us to forget about our solid business and go crazy with our unstable business. That is the nature of the business and also the nature of people.

When it comes to doing things in a different manner, we must first understand the difference between nature and discipline. Our nature



causes us to do things for “today” and causes us to maintain a “fire fighting” mindset. We are so busy putting out fires, we don't take the time to make sure that no additional fires get started.

Discipline, on the other hand, is the single most important trait to have. It is the common thread between all successful people. Recently I asked a group to define discipline for me. Someone in the front row gave me a great answer. He said that it is to do the things that you don't want to do. That almost summed it up. To complete the definition we must add something. It is to be proactive and to do the important things that we don't want to do.

I once heard the results of a study where a group of CEOs got together to determine the single most common trait in people who are the most likely to be promoted. They concluded that it is not just one trait, but two traits—the ability to prioritize or to know what is important, and the ability to

complete those tasks.

When business goes up, such as what is happening with this current refinance boom, our pro-activity goes down to almost nothing because we are spending our time putting out fires.

The other side of that coin is what happens when business goes down, such as when, not if, this current refinance market ends. That is when our behavior becomes reactive. We scramble to obtain agent business, or any other kind we can to stay profitable or, for some, to stay in business.

The important thing to notice in this example is that pro-activity is not an act driven by our nature. It is only driven by discipline and that comes from focus. Here are three rules to live by when it comes to building a strong stable business and developing and maintaining high levels of discipline.

Break the Law of Tradition

Understanding how the industry currently builds business is the law of tradition. This law says that we should be prospecting, and it is correct in that regard. However, it says that we should “target” and “pursue” real estate agents that currently have business and are not directing that business to our title company.

In most situations, this looks like a good approach to use. The only problem is when we work with salespeople who operate this way, we find over and over again how this system does not work. Salespeople find themselves calling on agents multiple times while obtaining little or no new business from them. Why? The answer is simple—the lack of value!

Develop the Law of Value

Recently I received a call from a sales manager of a large title company. He was getting ready to have a sales meeting with his team. He posed the question, “How many calls does it take to get your first order from a prospect?” My answer was 47 or 1. I told him that the more your value goes up, the less calls you have to make before receiving your first order. On the other hand, the lower the value delivered by the salesperson, the higher the number of sales calls needed to obtain business. With that in mind, many salespeople will never receive that first order from certain prospects.

Since value is the key, what is value? Everyone thinks they know, but most do not. It is important to know the value rules.

Rule #1: “Value is only that which exceeds the prospect’s expectations.”

Once we understand rule number one, we must apply it with rule number two.

Rule #2: “It is impossible to deliver value without first understanding the prospect’s expectations!”

This should make it clear what salespeople need to be doing if they want to earn new business by delivering value. They must first discover and then understand the expectations of their prospects.

The two key words for a system of sales that revolves around value would be “identify” and “deliver.” First, we must identify prospects that are in the best position to deliver value to and then deliver it.

Live the Law of Accountability

Studies have shown that only four

percent of the people who attend a seminar actually do something with what they hear. That means that 96% do nothing. To make things much worse, it is also known that only .8% do two or more things.

There was once a time when I was primarily a speaker. I did 50-75 seminars for title companies all over the nation each year. When we learned about the statistics noted above, we quickly changed what we did for title companies. We immediately began making joint sales calls with every person on each title companies’ sales team to assist them with implementation. That reversed the statistics. Now 96% of the people we work with implement our systems instead of the other way around. Why did they begin implementing? Accountability! For the first time ever, salespeople received assistance where they really needed it, in implementation, not just information.

As we addressed earlier in this article, value is the only thing that will work. However, we did not address who your best prospect is. One of the reasons that we must break the law of tradition is because it uses the “target” and “pursue” mentality. When we target someone who is not involved in a current transaction with us on either end, they become our worst prospect. That means the difference between our worst prospect and our best prospect is determined by timing alone.

The quality of your service is assumed by prospects when they are on the nondirecting end of a transaction. They actually think you treat all your clients the way you treated them on the other end. If they want to know what is going

on, they either have to call the directing agent or you, but never do we proactively communicate with them. That is what the non-directing client calls average-to-poor service. This makes the quality of their last experience with your company the primary thing in their mind when your salesperson calls on them. The only thing your salesperson has to use as a sales approach is words. Since actions (past poor experiences) speak louder than words (a sales presentation) that prospect is the worst because of the seed planted in their mind.

If you use this last thought in reverse order, you will see who your best prospect is. They are the ones on the nondirecting end of your

resale transactions. This is your opportunity to out service the company that they normally use. This will make them a great candidate to become a client. In this situation, your sales approach is based on actions and actions will remove any words or presentations that other title companies are currently using to lure that prospect away from you.

Here is a question to live by: "What would happen if the nondirecting real estate agents in your transactions were to receive better service while on the other end with you and your company than they do on the directing end with their title company of choice?" That question really doesn't need an answer, does it?

So I ask you, "Is there life after refi?" Yes, if you do the right things, deliver value and maintain high levels of discipline to be proactive and work on the important things and not just the urgent.

Darryl Turner is the CEO of National Business Development, a growth strategies company exclusively for the title industry. He can be reached at 1-800-348-SELL, ext. 208, or visit his Web site at www.TitleSales.com.



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MERS: The Wave of the Future

by Dan McLaughlin

Rapid access to information is quickly changing the real estate finance industry, and MERS (Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc.) is the center of some changes. MERS, created to eliminate assignments, is reducing costs and paperwork in the mortgage banking industry. The development of MERS® Link promises to save time and paperwork for the title industry.

The new service, which queries the MERS® System for information important to title companies, is a cooperative effort between MERS, ALTA, and EDS, our technology partner. Due to the recent rapid growth of loans registered on the MERS® System, MERS was approached by ALTA to provide an alternative to the MERS Voice Response Unit

the system via the telephone and key in a MIN (Mortgage Identification Number) or an applicable social security number to learn servicer information. Although this function works well for the general public, ALTA wanted a more streamlined solution for title professionals. ALTA funded the project and we worked with EDS to enable MERS® Link to interact with the MERS® System.

The browser-based MERS® Link allows settlement agents to quickly determine the correct current servicer of loans registered on the MERS® System. Users may enter the property address, borrower name, borrower social security number, or the loan's MIN.

Because multiple servicing transfers are common during the



servicer is typically updated on the MERS® System within 24 hours of being notified of the transfer.

Launched in April 1997, the MERS® System is an electronic registry that tracks changes in service and beneficial ownership rights. Member companies use either MOM (MERS as the Original Mortgagee) language security instruments, or assignments into MERS and use an 18-digit MIN to track changes for the life of the loan. Today, the system tracks more than 4 million registered loans and about 9,500 loans are registered on the system daily. Loan registrations are accelerating at a rapid pace and are expected to have doubled by the end of the year.


MERS® Link wasn't incorporated into the MERS® System originally because browser-based business processing was still in its infancy in 1997. But the convergence of two trends, the recent rapid adoption of MERS and the maturing of e-commerce

The browser-based MERS® Link allows settlement agents to quickly determine the correct current servicer of loans registered on the MERS® System.

(VRU.) The VRU provides toll-free telephone access to MERS for determining the current servicer of a loan. The VRU has proven to be reliable and is still a good solution for low volume users.

Access to the VRU hasn't changed in four years. Title companies and consumers dial into

life of a loan, opportunities for unrecorded assignments, delays in recording assignments, and even misidentified servicers exist. MERS minimizes those possibilities because it eliminates the need to record assignments when servicing rights are traded between MERS members. The identity of the new



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Access to MERS® Link

ALT A is proud to be a partner with MERS and EDS in the development of MERS® Link, the gateway to MERS loans online. ALTA's Board of Governors believes that instantaneous access to loan information via the Internet is so important to members' businesses, that they authorized the expenditure of funds to move the infant MERS® Link project along at a faster pace than was originally scheduled. In return, ALTA members have received an incredible savings incentive to use this new service.

At membership renewal time, ALTA members were given the opportunity to access MERS via the Internet. At press, 660 members have signed up. Because ALTA is a major underwriter of this service, we can offer MERS® Link to members for only \$35 per log-in/password! This is one-tenth of the cost that ALTA nonmembers pay for the same service. Additionally, for those who sign up this year, ALTA and MERS are guaranteeing this low \$35 fee for 2001 and 2002.

To qualify, membership in ALTA must be current (paid through December 2001.) Once the \$35 payment is received, you will be assigned a log-in and a password and can begin using the system. Members can sign up for more than one password if there will be multiple users.

The ALTA MERS® Link program gotten off to an incredible start. At press time, almost 700 ALTA member log-ins have been assigned. Additionally, many members who passed up the opportunity to sign up for MERS® Link at renewal time call ALTA headquarters daily to take advantage of this valuable new member benefit and add MERS® Link to their ALTA membership.

If you have not signed up for MERS, you still can, but only for a limited time—June 30, 2001 is the deadline to get the \$35 rate for this year and next. After that, MERS® Link access fees will increase. Contact Elizabeth Twitchell, ALTA's research & membership assistant, at elizabeth_twitchell@alta.org or 1-800-787-ALTA to sign up for this new member benefit and take advantage of the low introductory fee.

over the Internet ensured that MERS Link's time had come.

Even with MERS® Link's improved performance and capability, MERS will continue to support the VRU. MERS is committed to providing free general access to servicer information on MERS-registered loans.

MERS® Link is a business to business application, only available to ALTA and MERS members for a fee. The differences in MERS® Link and the VRU are in the Web's unique capacity to format

information and link to other company's information with the click of the mouse. MERS® Link's expanded capabilities greatly increase the amount and flow of information available to title companies.

MERS® Link is accessible from www.mersinc.org (look for the MERS® Link logo) or the ALTA Web site (www.alta.org.) After entering the required Org ID, Username and Password, users can retrieve the borrower's name, property address, lot, block,

subdivision and parcel number if present; security instrument and assignment recording information if present; and current servicer/subservicer identification contact information.

Other features include cross-reference MIN information capabilities, links to servicer/subservicer Web sites if available and the ability to retrieve, print, store and download information on multiple MINs.

The ability to retrieve information on more than one loan at a time is a major advantage over the VRU. MERS® Link also provides file-downloading capability, and the elimination of writing down the information or having it faxed back to the requester's office. Another major advantage is a "hot link" to servicers that maintain Web sites. This advantage depends on servicers furnishing their Web site link, which we actively encourage.

Frank Tucker, MERS account manager for EDS, and his team confronted the task of creating the search function to locate and display the MINs, social security numbers, property addresses, and the other fields MERS and ALTA required. MERS, ALTA, and EDS continued to work closely to ensure the final product met the title industry's needs and could be expanded if needed.

The EDS team began development in August 2000, and had MERS® Link ready for testing in October. Melva Moore, a MERS product performance manager who played a major role during the testing phase, worked closely with ALTA's Kelly Throckmorton to ensure system compatibility and user friendliness.

Melva coordinated MERS® Link tests using queries from ALTA and EDS. Thanks to a clear vision, and cooperation between developer and users, the User Acceptance Testing phase went smoothly. By the end of the year, MERS® Link was ready for prime time.

Prime time came in February. Melva and Rodney Mason, from EDS, took MERS® Link on the road for a demonstration at the 2001 ALTA Tech Forum. They demonstrated the system's easy access via the Internet and how easily title information is retrieved.

Melva described visitor comments as both positive and encouraging. Visitors liked the added property address and borrower name search criteria. They understood the importance of a search that could connect to the servicer's Web site. The conference attendees said the ability to retrieve information and then connect to

the servicer's Web site for additional information was another time saver and a definite improvement over the VRU. They also liked being able to see the information, then saving and printing it, which eliminated a request to fax back the information.

The future of MERS® Link may include the ability to obtain payoff information from the servicer's Web site, which would reduce the number of payoff-related inquiries.

We have also adapted MERS® Link for county recorders who would like to deploy it in their own shops. In this configuration, MERS® Link will only retrieve servicer information specific to loans registered on MERS in that county.

We invite your suggestions for how to get the most out of MERS® Link for yourself, your company, and your industry.

Dan McLaughlin is the executive vice president, MERS Product Division. Dan was the architect of the MERSfi System and designs the business processes and procedures under which MERS operates. Dan can be reached at danm@mersinc.org or 703-761-1277.

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*Pre-Conference activities, June 13, 2001.

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Viewpoint

by R.K. Arnold

This April marks the fourth anniversary of the first two loans registered on the MERS[®] System. Norwest Mortgage and Allied Group Mortgage registered one loan apiece on April 29, 1997. We expect that we'll have about 4 million loans registered on the MERS[®] System by this April 29.

There have been a lot of changes at MERS since those first two loans were registered four years ago, but two things haven't changed—our focus on eliminating assignments and our service to you.

We put the wrap on another productive MERS User Conference for about 160 attendees in March. We want to thank our conference sponsors: Chase, Freddie Mac, Firstar, Alliance, GMAC-RFC, OnLine Documents and Principal Financial. Our next User Conference is scheduled for November 5 and 6.

Our 2001 Prepaid Registration Program exceeded expectations. Forty companies bought more than 1.2 million registrations at a 15 percent discount. That's a good yardstick for measuring the MERS value proposition, because it tripled our goal.

We also introduced our Correspondent Lender Integration Program (CLIP) to interested companies. CLIP aims to strengthen the relationship between aggregators and their correspondents by helping trading partners integrate each other.

CLIP to Increase MERS Integrations

Recently, five MERS[®] Ready companies were part of the MERS Correspondent Lender Integration Program, or CLIP.

"This new program looks to strengthen the relationship between aggregators and their correspondents, and increase the number of MERS[®] Ready companies selling to aggregators," explained Ron Crowe, a MERS business integration director.

According to Crowe, who developed the program, a MERS integration specialist spends between 60 and 90 days integrating one member. With CLIP, an aggregator can have five or six MERS[®] Ready correspondents saving money in that period. Aggregators know their correspondents' needs and can tailor a program to fit those needs, Crowe said.

Crowe has trained and certified

Fleet Mortgage, GreenPoint Mortgage, Flagstar, North American Mortgage Company and Firstar representatives as CLIP Leaders. CLIP Leaders are the program's linchpins. Working closely with MERS integration specialists, CLIP Leaders guide their correspondents through the MERS integration process.

"We hope CLIP and our relationship with our correspondents will speed their move to MERS," said Jim Oliver, senior vice president, Correspondent Division, Firstar Bank. "Our message is we want you MERS[®] Ready and you can call Firstar for MERS integration. I see CLIP saving money, time, and effort for everyone."

Contact Crowe at 770-761-3226, for information about developing a CLIP program or future CLIP Leader certifications.

Members Invest 1.2m Prepaid Registrations in MERS Future

Forty companies endorsed the future of MERS when they bought more than 1.2 million MERS[®] System prepaid loan registrations.

"This is our most successful prepayment opportunity, and it exceeded expectations," said Carson Mullen, Customer Division executive vice president. "Given interest rates and anticipated loan volumes, MERS wanted members at all mortgage industry levels to share in our success.

"Every business from small brokers to the largest wholesalers

are participants in MERS and realize millions of dollars in annual savings from the elimination of assignments," Mullen added.

The 2001 Prepaid Loan Registration Program reduced the \$3.50 registration fee to \$2.95—a 15 percent savings. Member companies and several prospective MERS members purchased anywhere from the minimum of 5,000 to 200,000 loan registrations. The discounted registrations must be used by June 2003, and can be transferred between members.

Straight Talk

by Sharon Horstkamp

Modification agreements change Promissory Notes and Security Instruments. When MERS is the mortgagee of record, the modification agreement should reference MERS. The reason is because MERS holds the mortgage as nominee for the Lender, but the Lender holds the interest to the promissory note.

A recorder is refusing to accept my modification agreement, what can I do?

The standard modification agreement is between the Borrower and the Lender. The agreement amends and supplements (1) the Mortgage, Deed of Trust, or Deed to Secure Debt (Security Instrument) and (2) the Note bearing the same date as, and secured by, the Security Instrument. Prior to MERS, the standard agreement worked because the Lender was the mortgagee of record and could modify the mortgage and also had the authority to modify the Note.

However, if MERS is the mortgagee of record, the Lender can't modify the mortgage without the "mortgagee's" consent. Therefore, Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac changed the modification agreements to reflect MERS as the mortgagee of record.

Their change states the Agreement amends and supplements the Mortgage, Deed of Trust, or Deed to Secure Debt (Security Instrument) granted or assigned to Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc., as nominee for the Lender. The change also recommended a signature line be added for MERS to sign the agreement in its mortgagee capacity. A MERS certifying officer can sign the Agreement. It is important to note that a MERS signature doesn't replace the Lender's signature, because MERS isn't modifying the note. Therefore, the Lender and MERS must sign the document.

MERS to Move Headquarters

We will relocate our corporate headquarters as of July 1. Rest assured we'll try to keep the change as invisible to you as possible. You'll see more information on the move as we approach the summer. Our new address will be:

**1595 Spring Hill Rd.
Suite 310
Vienna, VA 22182**

Our phone and fax numbers will remain the same.

Thank you for helping us continue our success.

MERS Conference Promotes Change, Cooperation

MERS User Conferences bring businesses together for a change.

Some of the more than 160 attendees learned for the first time how MERS changes business operations and the potential of MERS in the real estate finance industry. Other participants were back for their second or third conference, refining and expanding their work experience and previous conference lessons.

"You can read only so much," said two-time conference attendee John Fiske, GreenPoint MERS manager. "These conferences provide great interaction."

Dan McLaughlin, MERS executive vice president, Product Division, highlighted the cooperative interaction created at MERS conferences in his opening remarks. "This is a unique opportunity to put aside the competition for two days and hear from people who have been involved in the MERS process and know the rewards and challenges."

Chase, Freddie Mac, Firstar, Alliance, GMAC-RFC, OnLine Documents, and Principal sponsored the conference. The MERS Fall User Conference is scheduled for Nov. 5 and 6, in Reston, Va.

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Movers & Shakers

California



Timothy P. Sullivan has been named senior vice president and national litigation counsel for First American Corp., Santa Ana. He was also named senior vice president of its largest subsidiary, First American Title Insurance Co., while continuing as general counsel. Sullivan joined First American Title in 1992.



Anand K. Nallathambi has been named president of First American's consumer information group. Nallathambi will continue to serve as president of First American CREDCO, a position he has held since 1999. Nallathambi joined First American with the 1995 acquisition of CREDCO.

Connecticut



David S. Veleber, Esq. has been named title counsel for the Rocky Hill office of Connecticut Attorneys Title Insurance Co. Prior to joining CATIC, Veleber was an associate with the Cheshire law firm of Fazzone Baillie Ryan & Seadale, LLC, where he specialized in real estate law.

Florida

Tom Jackson and **Fred Brannon** have been named title examiners for Fidelity National Title Insurance Co. of NY. The two will be located in FNT's Florida headquarters in Maitland.

Georgia

Pamoja B. Pagnotta has been named vice president and underwriting counsel for the Atlanta National Commercial Services office of LandAmerica. Previously, she was senior underwriting counsel for Lawyers Title.

Idaho



Alliance Title and Escrow, Boise, has announced three new employees. **Dave Fauth** has been named general manager of the Treasure Valley Alliance Title and Escrow offices. He has 15 years of experience in the title industry.



Bill Johnson, Sr. has been named Canyon County manager. Prior to joining Alliance, Johnson worked as manager in the Customer Service Call Center for Micronpc.com. And, **Stephen Clausen** has joined the company



as marketing director of Ada and Canyon Counties. He has 15 years experience in title insurance, mortgage lending, and sales and marketing.

North Carolina



Investors Title Insurance Co., Chapel Hill, has two employee announcements. **David A. Bennington** has been promoted to senior vice president-senior title attorney. Bennington joined Investors in 1986. He is a past president of the NC Land Title Association.

new ALTA members

California

Mark A. Ransom
Mark A. Ransom, Attorney at Law
Camarillo

Gail S. Casciola, Esq.
Option One Mortgage Corporation
Irvine

Florida

Trish Matarazzo
Alliance Title of Brevard, LLC
Melbourne

Skip Straus
e-cloz.com LLC
Weston

Kansas

Gloria M. Fowles
Central Plains Title, LLC
Clay Center

Louisiana

Janet Attuso
JTA Abstracting, L.L.C.
Gonzales

Joyce L. Schenewerk
McGlinchey Stafford
New Orleans

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Tine K. Dickey
Affiliated Title Management LLC
Baltimore

Missouri

Eric T. Theroff
Lewis, Rice & Fingersh, L.C.
Kansas City

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Fax: 602-404-9933

Internet: www.titleprogram.com

email: walkerntpa@aol.com



North Carolina, cont.



Julie H. Seagroves has been named marketing manager for the Durham and Chapel Hill offices of Investors Title Insurance Co. Previously, she was senior loan coordinator for SOUTHbank.

South Carolina



Wilson W. McDonald, has been named vice president for marketing and underwriting for the state for Investors Title Insurance Co. Prior to joining Investors Title,

McDonald was an attorney with the law firm of Pratt-Thomas, Pearce, Epting and Walker, P.A., and was vice president and deputy general counsel for Resource Bancshares Mortgage Group, Inc.

Texas



Julie Emshoff has been promoted to vice president of the products division of Landata Systems, Inc., a wholly owned subsidiary of Stewart Information

Services, Houston. Most recently, she was vice president and director of sales, marketing and product management. She started with Landata in 1991.

Virginia



Karen L. Schmidt has joined LandAmerica Financial Group, Inc., Richmond, as executive vice president of markets. Previously, Schmidt held executive positions with

global consulting firms, Andersen Consulting, KPMG and BVDO Seidman, where she was most recently partner and executive director of marketing and sales.

And, **Stephen M. Connor** has been named senior vice president of the National 1031 Exchange Company and LandAmerica Exchange Company, also in Richmond. He has been an attorney in the national commercial real estate arena for over 16 years.

Mergers & Acquisitions

First American Title Insurance Co., Santa Ana, CA, has acquired Androskoggin Title Co. in Auburn, ME. First American has also acquired Del Norte County Title Co., in Crescent City, CA.

Stewart Title Co., Houston, TX, has acquired Western Colorado Title Co., in Grand Junction, CO. Stewart has also acquired Cuesta Title Co. in San Luis Obispo and the Central Coast, CA, and Charter Title Corp. of Washington state.

Title Midwest of Topeka has purchased Jefferson County Abstract Co. in Oskaloosa, KS.

The Knight-Barry Group, L.L.C., Racine, WI, has acquired Port Abstract and Title Company in Ozaukee County. The acquisition makes Knight-Barry one of Wisconsin's largest real estate title companies.

Subsidiary

The Security Title Guarantee Corp. of Baltimore, MD, has announced the formation of a wholly owned subsidiary, Affiliated Title Management, LLC in Baltimore. The new subsidiary will provide assistance to title agents and potential partners in the creation of Affiliated Business Arrangements in accordance with federal and state regulations.

new ALTA members

Nebraska

Bennie C. Taylor
Schacht Abstract & Title
Neligh

New York

Michael Yonkovig
Brownell Abstract Corporation
Watertown

Christopher Quintero
ClosingGuard.com
Kew Gardens, NY

Mark S. Gunther, Esq.
Phillips, Lytle, Hitchcock, Blaine & Huber LLP
Rochester, NY

Rafael Castellanos
Strategic Title Agency, LLC
New York

Ohio

Ronald D. Yacobozzi
AmeriTitle Company, Inc.
Lorain

Rachel J. Nixon
Wilmington

Kurt Henderson
Title Solutions, Inc.
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Holly Reichert
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Situations wanted or help wanted ads are \$80 for the first 50 words, \$1 for each additional word, 130 words maximum. Insertion rate drops to \$70 for first 50 words for three or more consecutive placements. For sale or wanted to buy ads are \$250 for 50 words, \$1 for each additional word, 130 words maximum. Insertion rate drops to \$225 for 50 words for three or more consecutive placements. Placing a box around an ad costs an extra \$20 for help wanted or situations wanted, \$50 for sale or wanted to buy. Blind box service available upon request.

To place a classified ad in Marketplace, send ad copy and check made payable to American Land Title Association to: *Title News* Marketplace, ALTA, 1828 L Street, N.W., Suite 705, Washington, DC 20036.

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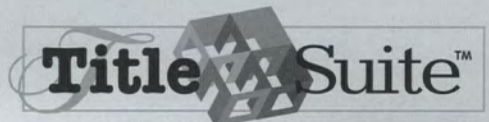
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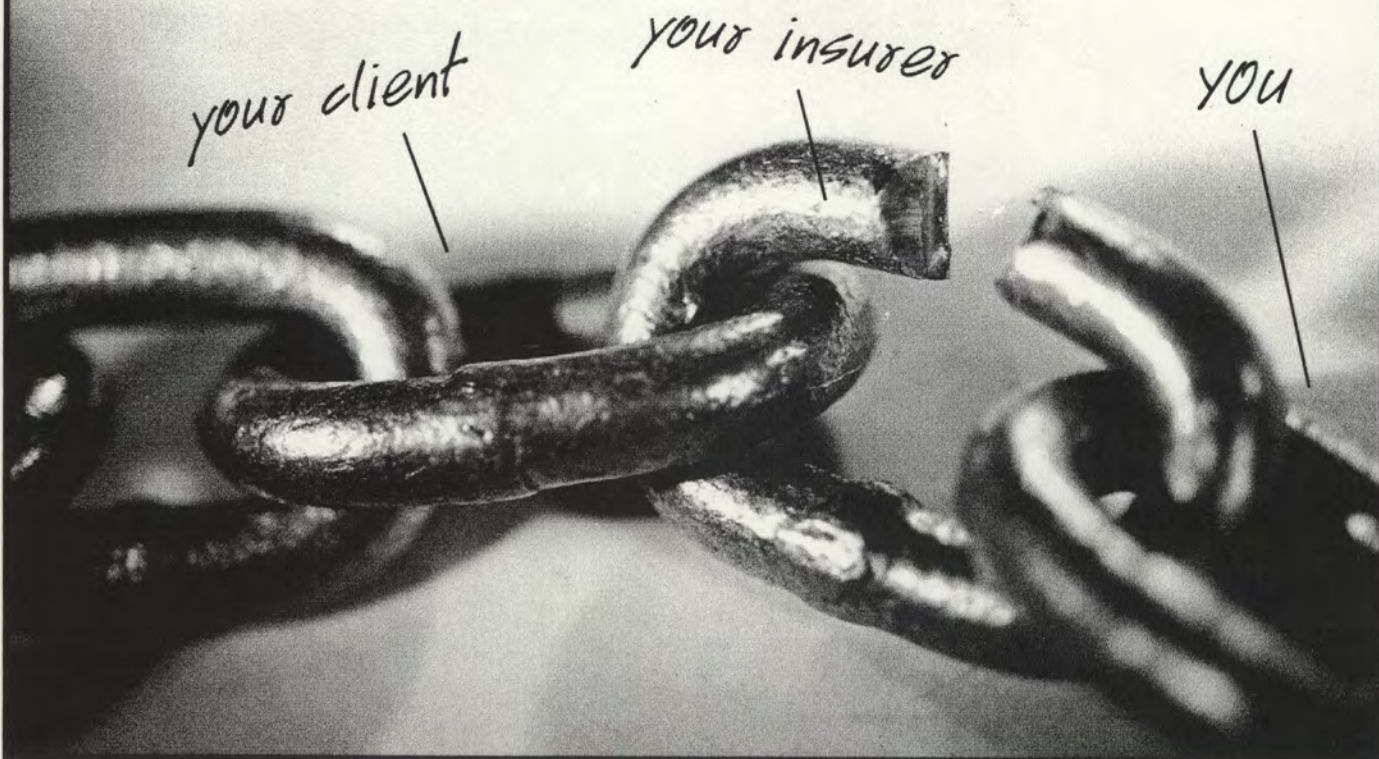
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