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American Land Title Association

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# Title News

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# leading edge

## A Message from the Title Insurance Underwriters Section Chair

### A Noble Profession

At a recent retirement dinner for one of our state managers, a video was shown with agents and employees wishing him well in his retirement.

Watching the video it struck me that these were all honest, hardworking, dedicated professionals who are committed to our industry. I know that the vast majority of us see the "typical" title professional that same way. Contrast that understanding with how we're viewed by some regulators and legislators. Therein lies the disconnect between how we see ourselves and how we're perceived by others (and how we're too often portrayed in the press).

We consider our contribution to America's economic engine an important one, especially during the last few years when the housing market has been carrying the day. We all know, but almost never tell anyone, that the service we provide every day is one of the cornerstones to the unbelievably dynamic mortgage market that has enabled a higher degree of homeownership than exists anywhere else on earth. If thoughtless legislation or hasty regulations destroy our role in the real estate process, what effect will that have on homeownership in America? Can our critics possibly believe that it is an accident that American consumers can buy—and American lenders can loan money for—real estate with complete confidence that the core of the transaction (ownership of the land) is something they can rely on? Is it a coincidence that this is not the case in many other parts of the world? The answer, of course, is no.

The press, along with some regulators, legislators, and customers, has portrayed our industry as fraught with rebates, numerous sham ABAs, illegal inducements, incomprehensible rating structures, overpriced products, and a lack of competition. It's time to face reality, because that's how we're perceived.

So, what can we do about it? I think we, agent and underwriter alike, must be determined to stand up for our industry.

Many of the problems we are facing are self-inflicted, so we should start with ourselves. We should clean up our industry now, instead of waiting for the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to recommend something worse to Congress. Then, we should take our message on the road and visit as many regulators and legislators as we can. Our story is a compelling one, and we must look for opportunities to tell it.

I plan to propose these two things to the ALTA Board of Governors: (1) that ALTA adopt a title industry code of ethics, and (2) that ALTA formulate a plan to send a group representing the agent and underwriting sections to various insurance commissioners throughout the United States.

We'd like to know what you think about these proposals. Please send your comments to Jim Maher at [jim\\_maher@alta.org](mailto:jim_maher@alta.org) or to me at [gkermott@firstam.com](mailto:gkermott@firstam.com).

Gary L. Kermott

# TitleNews

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Editor in Chief: Lorri Lee Ragan, APR  
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ASSOCIATION PUBLICATIONS

# ALTAnews

## Title Problems Found in 36 Percent of Transactions

According to a newly released study by ALTA, one-third of all title searches done in 2005 had problems with the title. This is up from 25 percent in 2000.

The most frequent curative action taken last year was obtaining releases and/or obtaining payoffs for discovered liens, such as prior or existing first or second mortgages, unpaid child and spousal support, outstanding taxes, and other judgments against the property. The next most common curative action was obtaining releases for assignment on deeds of trust/and or mortgages, followed closely by recording errors of names, addresses, or legal descriptions of the property.

These results are from the 2005 Abstractor & Title Agent Operations Survey, which tracks changes in the title industry including revenue, the number of orders received, number of employees, and geographic scope. This year members were asked "What percentage of orders require curative actions prior to closing or policy issuance?" To order a full copy of the survey, go to ALTA's Web site under Publications, and ALTA Online Store.

## ALTA Tech Forum Produced Winners

Three attendees at ALTA's 2006 Tech Forum this past April in Las Vegas went home with grand prizes. Eric McNeese of AmeriPoint Title in San Antonio, TX, was the first grand prize winner. He won a plazma TV sponsored by Reconveyance Services. Kathy Nathan of Dodge County Title & Escrow in Fremont, NE, was the second grand prize winner – a \$500 gift certificate to the technology store of her choice. And Daniel Chapin, of U.S. Title Agency, Cleveland, OH, will select from an HP printer or a \$500 gift certificate to the technology store of his choice. All prize drawings took place in the Exhibit Showcase. Look for more great prizes at next year's Tech Forum, April 22-24, 2007, in Denver, CO.

## First Ever TIPAC Golf Tournament

Save the date of Friday, October 13, to play golf at the prestigious Presidio Golf Course overlooking the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco. The golf tournament will take place during the ALTA Annual Convention, October 11-13. The proceeds will benefit TIPAC, ALTA's political action committee. Look for more details on signing up soon.



## calendar

### ALTA Events

**July**  
15-17  
Technology Committee Meeting  
Vail, CO

**20-22**  
Education Committee Meeting  
Okemos, MI

**21-23**  
Title Agents Executive Conference  
Kohler, WI

**August**  
20-22  
Research-Abstractor/Agent Meeting  
Galena, IL

**September**  
10-12  
Reinsurance Committee  
Miami Beach, FL

**17-19**  
Annual Accountants Meeting  
Moran, WY

**October**  
11-14  
ALTA Annual Convention  
Westin St. Francis,  
San Francisco, CA

### State Conventions

**July**  
9-11 Michigan  
13-15 Illinois  
13-15 Utah

**August**  
3-5 Indiana  
3-5 Montana  
10-12 Kansas  
17-19 Idaho (OR & WA )  
20-23 New York  
25-27 Minnesota

**September**  
7-10 Maryland  
10-12 Ohio  
13-15 Arizona  
13-16 Colorado  
14-17 Dixie Land (AL, GA, MS)  
14-16 Missouri  
14-16 North Carolina  
20-22 Nebraska  
21-23 North Dakota

**October**  
19-20 Wisconsin

**November**  
15-17 Florida

**December**  
6-8 Louisiana

# ALTAnews

## New Industry Forms Adopted

By the time this issue of *Title News* hits the streets, the ALTA Board of Governors will have adopted a variety of new industry forms. The ALTA Forms Committee reviewed the forms and made updates based on market input. If your company previously purchased the Policy Forms Handbook, you will automatically receive a copy of these new forms. Some of the new forms will be available on the ALTA Web site for a short time, then will be available for purchase. Look for an article on the new forms in the September/October issue of *Title News*.

## Annual Convention Hotel Block Now Open



Even though the ALTA Annual Convention (Oct 11-14 in San Francisco) is still several weeks away, we encourage you to reserve your room early. You can book your room now at the beautiful Westin St. Francis by calling 800-228-3000. Rates are \$255 for single or double for a Traditional room. Deluxe and Grandview rooms are slightly higher. Registration for the convention will be available on ALTA's Web site shortly. And look for the full registration brochure in mid- July.

## Public Awareness Campaign Update

### Advertising

To help promote involvement in National Homeownership Month, we have ads running in REALTOR magazine thanking Realtors for their participation in helping people buy homes. Ads promoting National Homeownership Month to the home-buying public will also appear in June in the Washington, D.C., editions of *Newsweek*, *Time*, *U.S. News & World Report* and *Sports Illustrated*.

Our regular ads promoting the value of title insurance will run in the June, September, and October editions of *Mortgage Banking*, *National Mortgage News*, and the *National Journal*.

In addition, consumers using the search engine Google looking up for key words associated with the title industry, will see ALTA's Web site near the top of their search for the months of June through August – peak consumer homebuying season.

### Media Relations

Ervin Bell was heavily involved in preparing testimony and press materials for ALTA's testimony before the House Financial Services Subcommittee. (See the full story in the Government News section.)

Ervin Bell wrote and distributed a press release about a recent ALTA survey indicating that title companies find problems in 36 percent of their transactions. We received good pickup on the story.

Finally, Ervin Bell worked to firm up details of our participation in the *Real Estate Today* radio talk show. The talk show is based out of Seattle, WA, and airs in 47 markets across the country. Anne Anastasi, ALTA board member and chair of the ALTA Public Relations Committee, flew to Seattle to field questions on the one-hour radio show. ALTA created a 30-second radio ad that will run on this show for the next 13 weeks. The host was so pleased with Anne's participation that he has invited her back sometime later this year to do another show.

### Marketing

Ervin Bell worked with Nashville Title Insurance Corporation to customize a 30-second TV commercial for their local market. The commercial ended with the tagline, "Brought to you by the title professionals at Nashville Title." To find out how you can customize the kit materials, contact Lorri Ragan at ALTA at [lorri\\_ragan@alta.org](mailto:lorri_ragan@alta.org) or 800-787-2582 ext. 218.

## ALTA Testifies on Title Insurance Before House Subcommittee

ALTA President Rande Yeager testified at an April 26 hearing on title insurance held by the House Financial Services Housing and Community Opportunity Subcommittee. Other witnesses included Erin Toll, the Colorado Deputy Insurance Commissioner, and representatives from HUD, the GAO, Consumer Federation of America, RESPRO, and the National Association of Realtors. About a dozen members of Congress attended the hearing.

Full Committee Chairman Oxley said he was troubled by some practices within our \$17 billion industry, especially after a GAO study raised questions about its cost structure and regulation. For instance, the GAO said it could not determine the extent that premium rates reflect underlying costs for companies issuing such policies.

Oxley said it is clear that kickbacks from title insurance companies to lenders, attorneys, and real estate agents in exchange for business are an "endemic problem." He added that HUD and state insurance commissioners do not have the resources to oversee the industry. "This is a structural marketplace problem that at some point Congress will have to address," Oxley said. He also noted that about 5 percent of the annual premiums for title insurance are paid out in claims, a rate much lower than in property and casualty insurance, where at least 80 percent of premiums are paid out in the form of claims.

Subcommittee Chairman Bob Ney asked whether refinance rates were automatically given or if consumers had to request them. The regulators responded that it was a matter of state law.

In our testimony Rande said that our industry is competitive, with high fixed costs required to maintain title records and train staff to conduct searches. His testimony addressed why title insurance is different from property and casualty insurance. He applauded recent enforcement actions to stop the unfair competitive advantages caused by "sham" relationships and offered the following four-point recommendation to help minimize these actions.

- 1) Congress to amend Section 8 of RESPA to provide for a competitor's private right of action for injunctive relief for RESPA violations;
- 2) States to enact legislation that holds receivers of kickbacks to the same liability as givers;
- 3) HUD to provide guidance that the industry can rely on in a reasonable time, if the national settlement services associations request it; and
- 4) ALTA to continue to educate our members and the public about the benefits of title insurance, how it is sold, and how they can shop for settlement services.

You can read Rande's testimony on ALTA's home page.



Rande Yeager testifies on behalf of the title industry.



Subcommittee Chairman Bob Ney questions the panel.

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# Preparing to Sell Your Company – Even if You Never Will

Taking a good look at where your company is now and where it is going can be a valuable exercise, even if you never sell.

by Barry F. Flavin

I have been involved in the purchase and sale of a number of companies in the title business, and I've noticed that there seem to be more good reasons for buying companies than selling them. Sellers tend to forget about that when they have strategic or personal reasons to sell, and as a result, they tend to undervalue their companies.

The purpose of this article is to make agency owners aware that being ready to sell—that is making

their companies ready to respond to the typical motivations of buyers—will make them more valuable and, most often, better managed. I'll also throw in a few observations about the process and job of selling.

## THE PROCESS OF SELLING

The process of selling a title company is very time-consuming, and it is definitely work. The initial phase of collecting and reviewing the information necessary to evaluate the advisability and desirability of selling

your business will usually take about three or four months. The time period from that decision point through negotiating and deal structuring is normally six to nine months, and from letter of intent to closing another two months.

If you make it your business to handle it all, you will find time for little else, and the value of your business will surely diminish in the meantime. So you need to find the right firm to assist you in the process or the right person in your company

## cover story

to take over day-to-day management and leadership while you take charge of the selling process with the same vigor with which you run your company.

By now you've probably noticed that opening your office every day is not enough to fill it with orders, and yet so many agency owners when faced with the prospect or opportunity to sell don't bother to promote their companies—they simply offer them up for consideration. If those same owners were offered a chance to chase a big new customer in their town, they would launch a comprehensive plan of attack and fire every barrel to hit their target.

Yet when responding to a sincere inquiry from a potential purchaser or when soliciting the same, they foolishly adopt a passive "what'll you give me" coyness that almost guarantees a discounted offer. When it comes to selling your business, you have to make it happen, instead of letting it happen to you. So get rid of that passive mentality by first dropping the word "acquisition" from your vocabulary.

Mergers and acquisitions are both high-sounding terms, and the best buyers for your company are probably engaged in both, diligently and at a pretty high level. So unless your agency is producing over \$500 million in revenue annually, you are still considered a small business for them. Small businesses grow by selling, and they are sold by selling.

### DETERMINE VALUE

Who buys title companies and why is an interesting subject, and there is one rule that you can count on:

"The buyer rarely buys what the seller thinks he's selling."

—Peter Drucker

That's why it's so important to anticipate what motivates your

potential purchasers and to position your company to respond to those motivations in a way that will maximize your value. Don't get caught in the trap of thinking that any one formula or rule of thumb will help you determine your company's value. There are as many formulas as there are companies, and none of them apply to you.

If you put your price at the mercy of formulas, such as saying your company is worth "fives times earnings," I promise that some very skilled numbers people can always come up with a formula that takes all mercy out of the situation.

Maybe it's easier to deal with the prospect of selling your company if you have some easily calculated benchmark for value, but easy may mean you don't get what the company is truly worth.

### BUYING & SELLING CATCH PHRASES

There are some catch phrases in the world of buying and selling companies that do have the ring of truth:

"One buyer is no buyer" is a pretty good rule; if the underlying value proposition for sale is strong, having more than one potential buyer can move the sales price upward.

*"The buyer rarely buys what the seller thinks he's selling."*

*—Peter Drucker*

"The looser the terms, the higher the price" will generally hold true. Anything that softens the impact on the balance sheet of the purchaser will likely move the price upward. The inverse is also true: "Cash deflates value."

When it comes to talking price, which I think is a lousy idea until you've provided solid support for

your opinions, remember: "The buyer sets the ceiling, and the seller sets the floor." That is, if either of them says a number first.

Finally, this is my own contribution: "The past is a bond, and the future is a growth stock. Never sell bonds." You don't want to be paid for what you have done; you want to be paid for what you will do with your new owner. In order to accomplish that goal, you will need to be prepared to present your company in terms of the buyer's future, underpinned by the results of your past, and the key word here is prepared.

### TIMING & DETERMINATION

If opportunity is what happens when luck meets preparedness, then the opportunity part of selling most often surfaces in the form of timing. The timing may be related to a surging market or a declining one, but it also may be related to a buyer's strategic plan, the loss of a key executive, or the need to have an asset in place to support a larger plan.

But timing can also be related to the time frame the buyer has set for action. And in that regard, the critical issue is having a documented past that serves as a baseline for the buyer's action. In fact, the key to

selling your company can be defined in those terms: The buyer buys a credible future and a well-documented past.

If your documentation is sufficient, the talks with your buyer can stay focused on the credible future, where most of your value resides. And a big part of your success to date may have been rooted in your daring and

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courage, but for this exercise, it's better to act like a Boy Scout than Indiana Jones. Be prepared.

In the process of building your documented past, you will discover the deficiencies in your operations, and you can take steps to mitigate them. That will make your company more valuable—even if you never sell.

During the process you will have to focus on areas of your operations that are not your favorite places to spend time. But you have to address every operational discipline, and optimally you will have a memorialized process and plan for each. In fact, the best possible documentation scenario is one that mimics an old-fashioned operating manual, which begins: "The light switch is to the right of the entry door," etc. That's a bit simplistic, but you get the idea.

Your financial records are critical too, and their format is important. If you're still accounting using Quickbooks™ software, it's going to be tough to get respect. If you're using a more sophisticated system with an expanded chart of accounts, having three to five years internal statements is a good first step. If you receive a compiled statement from your CPA each year in addition to your tax returns, better yet. If you have audited financials, well, your buyer will love you.

But if you can put together good statements with solid unit-volume information, you are really showing the value of your company now and in the future. Order counts, policy types, fee summaries, and almost anything else your production software will report are very valuable in establishing your credibility.

### ASSESSING EXPENSES & INCOME

A big part of the buyers' exercise in assessing your past will be in recasting your results to reflect how their ownership structure will impact them. Since, as a small business owner, you prudently utilize tax-avoidance strategies as guided by your professional advisers, publicly traded companies will try to assess how those strategies may suppress earnings that would be available to them. They will also look for ways in which economies of scale or redundancies may reap savings for them going forward.

You should do that too, in anticipation of their efforts. Owner-related expenses, surplus or deficit staffing that was adjusted, extraordinary write-downs, debts, reserves, discontinued business lines,

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## cover story

debt and debt service, and real estate are all areas where more profits for your buyer may be hiding in your statements, so drill down and find them.

In fact, every line on your Income Statement is likely to be impacted in a sale to a title insurance underwriter, so think through your statements in terms of the acquired entity, not the current entity. Remember that the buyer that can leverage its resources best will likely pay the most. And on a final note, make sure your chart of accounts will support the analysis required.

Also remember that Pareto's law has a corollary here: 80 percent of your value is in future business and 20 percent in book value. In truth, for most title agents your value is skewed even more toward the future. For any potential purchaser, return on investment is the key. But when looking at the post-acquisition period, buyers will question the adequacy of the present organization in terms of the size and structure needed to meet future goals.

So if you've run a too lean and too mean shop for all these years, don't expect to dazzle your buyers. They will more likely discount your value for the systemic weaknesses that they will be forced to address. One of the reasons your buyer is buying is because he believes he can take your company's performance up a notch. He can bridge a notch, but he doesn't want to risk leaping a chasm.

### WHO IS THE BEST BUYER?

So who's the best buyer for you? The correct answer is more than one, of course. But publicly traded companies are the premium buyers. They generally have available funding in the form of stock, they usually have some experience in buying companies, they're likely to seek a strategic fit, and they always

have the need to grow.

For most agents the public companies of choice as buyers are publicly traded title insurance companies, and each of them has the qualities mentioned. Those whom you don't represent as an agent may have an additional incentive in the form of new money, provided that your cultures don't clash. (And by now you have surely figured out that who you spend your days with is always more important than money.)

To determine which ones might be in the auction to be your best buyer, consider what new resources and dedication each could bring to

### *Every line on your Income Statement is likely to be impacted in a sale to a title insurance underwriter.*

your efforts to grow. Do a competitive analysis and demographic analysis of your market, to provide a baseline on each potential buyer. Consider what internal factors will enhance your value for each company: facilities, people, managers, and market niche. Forecast your profitability for at least three years forward for your leading candidates.

### BE ALL YOU CAN BE

Your value is wrapped up in what you can be, not what you are. Don't forget that there can be compelling reasons for buyers to be interested in you that can overcome market-cycle issues. These include the ability to achieve growth more rapidly than by internal effort, avoid the risks of internal start-ups or expansions, gain meaningful market share, either by volume or location, acquire outstanding management or technical personnel, and open markets.

Some of the best transactions were driven by these elements, and they were initiated by the seller, not the buyer. If you position your company for sale as an improvement exercise, you may be surprised to discover that the next best strategic step for you is to get up under the wing of a larger bird so that you can soar to new heights. Being able to express your future in terms of potential buyers will help clarify that path and lead to your obtaining a fair value for your company.

The sad truth of many acquisitions is that they were driven by the number one reason for acquisition —

according to the mergers and acquisition world — the buyer took advantage of his awareness that the seller's company was undervalued.

Take a closer look at who you are, think in terms of who you can be, document both, and find the buyer who agrees. That's how everybody wins and stays happy with the sale. And if you decide not to sell, you will still be ready for the alluring gaze of lady luck, should she be in your town one day.



Barry F. Flavin is the Sr. VP & southeast regional manager of The Talon Group, Clearwater, FL, a division of First American Title Insurance Company.

This article is an excerpt from his presentation at ALTA's 2006 Tech Forum. Barry can be reached at [bflavin@talongroup.biz](mailto:bflavin@talongroup.biz).

# Fearless Public Speaking

Making a good presentation is as simple as learning the three P's: Prepare, Practice, and Present. Once you master them you minimize your fear and will be able to speak anywhere.

by Anne L. Anastasi, CLTP

**M**any people are afraid of public speaking. They say it is the most feared thing amongst Americans today. I don't know who "they" are, but since I have heard this statement so many times, from so many people, I tend to believe it. Americans fear public speaking more than the next three items: death, snakes, and going to the dentist.

Now think about that statement: People would rather die, encounter a snake, or have a root canal than get up in front of others to give a speech. They would rather die! In my opinion, all we need to do is get to a level of comfort so that we can get back to fearing the more important things in life, such as running out of chocolate sauce or the outlawing of elastic waistbands.

I will not make light of the fear felt by most people prior to a talk because fear is a very personal thing. No one should tell you that you should or should not be afraid

because you feel what you feel. The goal of this article is to help you reduce that fear or at least help you cope with it.

### NERVES ARE OK

You have heard that great performers typically get nervous prior to stepping on the stage and that it is good to be nervous. There is some truth in that because if you are not

*Butterflies in your stomach and an attack of nerves actually help by increasing your breathing and making you focus.*

nervous, you have probably taken your audience for granted; the audience will know it immediately, and they will resent you for it. Butterflies in your stomach and an attack of nerves actually help by increasing your breathing and making you focus. And when you are forced to focus, you have engaged your brain – always a good thing. So accept the attack of nerves as your wake-up call to focus and breathe.

Whether you are a salesperson making a presentation to only one person, a CEO making a difficult speech to shareholders, or a manager working to motivate a team, the steps to preparing for a successful presentation are simple, gimmickless, and proven.

### STEP #1 PREPARE

The first step in my simple, three-step process is the preparation for your talk. "Winging it" is not acceptable. It is not fair to the audience that has taken time to come and hear you; it is not fair to the people who have asked you to speak; and if you are making a sales presentation, it is not fair to you, since you are shortchanging yourself.

### Begin With an Outline of the Topic.

All good speeches, like all good movies and books, should have a beginning, a middle, and an end. Your outline should follow this premise.

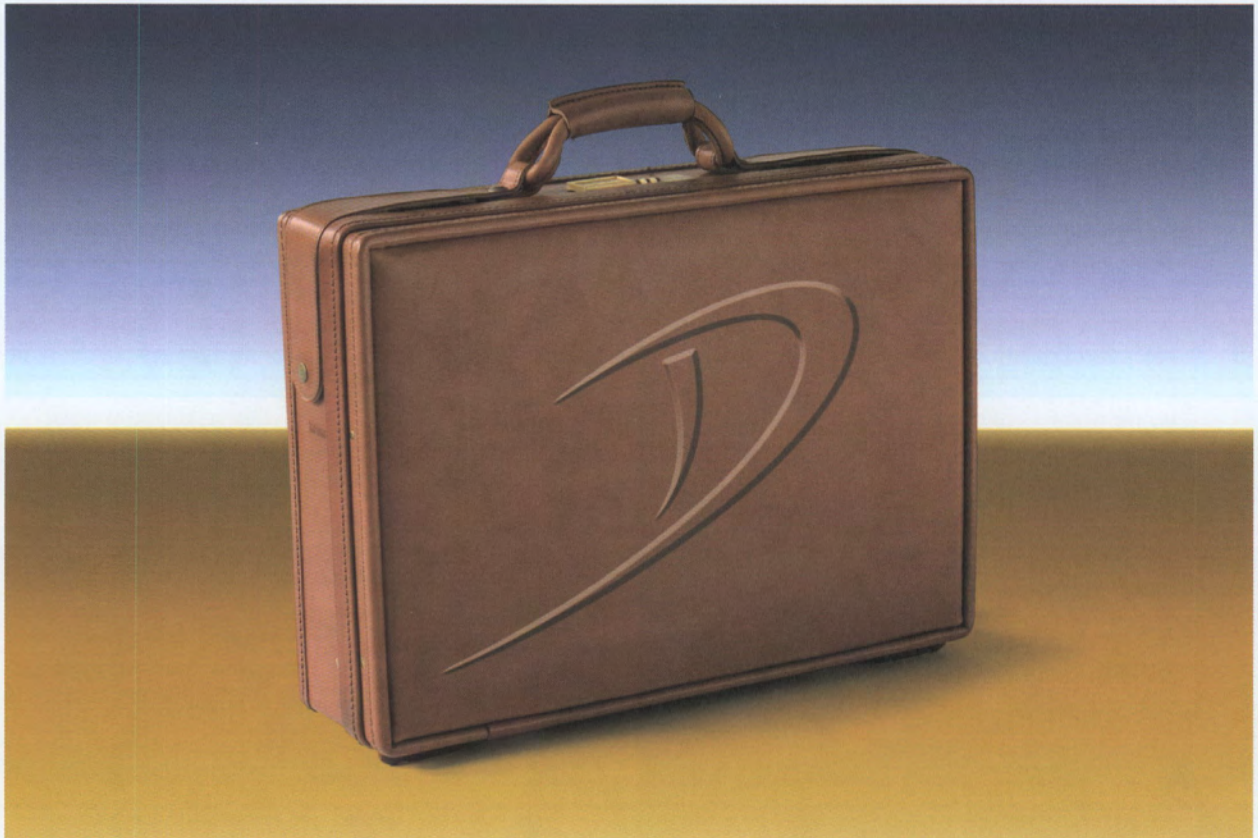
Your outline is simply a guide for your brain. Whether you are giving a motivational talk or a technical talk, you need to put the information in a logical, understandable order that is easy to follow. Start with the key pieces of information and write them down. Then fill in the subthoughts you wish to share. As you start filling in the outline you will undoubtedly think of other things to say and can edit the outline. The outline should be fluid and ever changing during this course of the preparation.



Anne L. Anastasi, CLTP, is president of Genesis Abstract, Inc. in Hatboro, PA, a member of ALTA's Board of Governors, and chair of ALTA's Public Relations Committee. This article is an excerpt from her book "Fearless Public

Speaking," which can be found at [www.Troonmanagement.com](http://www.Troonmanagement.com). Anne can be reached at [troon@attglobal.net](mailto:troon@attglobal.net)

# Going Places.



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# running your business

But it should remain an outline and not a fully written speech. It is your guide, your map; you will fill in the words during the practice part of your preparation.

One of my favorite authors is Nelson DeMille. His books are intelligently written, entertaining, and most importantly to me, they have a sense of humor. One of his frequent characters is a former NYPD homicide detective turned government agent, John Corey. John is a sarcastic malcontent who finds irony in most everything, yet he is a man who fights for justice without concern for his personal well-being. He is also a man who has no patience for stupidity, carelessness, or people who lack integrity. All and all, he's a cool guy.

In DeMille's book *Night Fall*

(2004) John Corey made a comment that I quickly wrote down for future use: "The problem with doing nothing is not knowing when you're finished." If you do not have an outline, if you do not have a map, if you do not have a goal, how do you know if your speech or presentation is doing what you want it to do?

And it is of the utmost importance to say something. Just filling in time without content is worthless, and you don't want people leaving your presentation thinking it was a waste of time. Personally, when I hear a presentation, I want to walk out invigorated, smiling, and mulling over what I have just learned.

## STEP#2 PRACTICE

The second step in our three-step process to better speechmaking is all

about practicing your talk. It is simple yet imperative.

### Talk to Yourself.

Once you have the outline, take it to a quiet, private room and speak out loud from the outline. Jot down the intelligent things you said during each section of the outline – not verbatim but in enough detail so that you can remember what you said. Make sure your technical facts are correct and put them in the outline so that you do not have to pull them from your nervous brain when you are standing in front of your audience. If you are unsure about the facts, either do more research or omit them from your talk.

During this "talking to yourself" period, your outline is beginning to grow into a speech. If you do not

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# running your business

have time to cover the whole outline during this segment, do it a portion at a time, but the key is to do this out loud at least three times, jotting notes as you go.

You may decide to change the order or your focus during the first practice session. Don't get married to any single idea until you have heard it delivered aloud. If it doesn't flow, if it doesn't make sense or doesn't convey the thought you had hoped, you will be the first one to hear it, which is far better than having your audience hear your meandering. It is difficult to change your mind and start over again, but I have always believed that it is ok to change your mind because if you never changed your mind, what is the point in having one?

After your outline and crib notes are completed, put the talk aside for a day to let your brain rest.

There is no substitute for practicing out loud: it will help you become comfortable and it will also allow you to time your speech.

If you are asked to speak for an hour, you will not know if you have enough material if you don't practice out loud and time it. Without knowing your timing you will either run out of material or you will only be partially through your thoughts when the moderator stands in the back of the room pointing to his or her watch.

*More* is always better than *less* however. If during your talk you decide to skip over a point that was made by another speaker earlier in the day, it is always a good idea to have a few extra notes, slides, or points to use.

The reason you need to practice your speech a number of times prior to the presentation is that the talk needs to become routine. You need to have the ability to get in the "zone" and allow yourself to get out of the way and let it happen. This will only

happen if you have practiced it enough so that it becomes second nature.

You can also deal with the fear of giving speeches by understanding that the audience is full of people who are afraid of giving speeches. They are rooting for you to succeed because if you fail, two things will happen:

- 1) They will feel very, very uncomfortable, and
- 2) One of them will have to take over... and remember they would rather die.

*The reason you need to practice your speech a number of times prior to the presentation is that the talk needs to become routine.*

## STEP #3 PRESENT

If you do the first two P's, you will have less to worry about when it comes time to do the third P - present. With preparation and practice you will have a plan, and you will know the talk backwards and forwards. Much of what makes us nervous is the fear of failing, which you can minimize if you know your talk cold!

All three steps have equal importance, but the presentation part takes passion. The type of speech you are giving, however, dictates the degree of passion used during the presentation. A motivational speech requires the highest form of passion, but having it and conveying it can be two different things. Your motivational talk must convey honest emotions about the topic. During your preparation and practice make sure you are using phrases that will motivate your audience and motivate you as the speaker (i.e. a tremendous idea, an outstanding method, a world-class product, the best in the business).

An educational or technical talk still requires passion albeit at a less

flamboyant level. Your passion will come through in your knowledge of the topic and thoroughness of your presentation of the points. A sales presentation takes passion about the product or passion about your abilities to get a job done.

## Warm Up Your Brain.

All intelligent athletes spend a significant amount of time prepping their muscles for maximum results and to prevent injury. Treat your brain as you would any other muscle,

and you know the importance of warming up prior to any activity involving your muscles. Golfers stretch their arm and leg muscles, as do swimmers, football players, baseball players, and race car drivers.

Our brains too benefit from a good warm-up prior to putting them into motion. If you know your brain is properly prepared to function at its highest possible level, it is one less thing to worry about while standing before your audience.

You ask, "How can I get injured during a speech?" Oh, let me count the ways. If you are giving a talk that includes facts and figures, your credibility is at stake; if you are giving a sales presentation a commission is at stake; if you are giving a motivational talk and you misspeak, your integrity is at stake. Oh yes, you can be injured if the brain does not function well during a talk.

Here are a few simple brain warm-ups:

- 1) Run some multiplication tables - start with the fives, 5, 10, 15, 20, 25 etc. Fives are easy. Then do the nines, and then challenge yourself with the eights.

# running your business

2) I like to pick numbers between one and one hundred and try to remember a professional athlete who wore the number. 17, John Havlicek, 23, Michael Jordan, 80, Jerry Rice, 35, Bernie Perant, 4, Bret Favre.

3) You could try naming musical bands from a to z: Abba, Beach Boys, Commodores, and so on. Let me know whom you pick when you get to "X"!

Don't agonize over the fact that you did not name every player or complete the multiplication table. These exercises are not suggested to create anxiety; they are merely ideas to get you ready for your speech.

## A Good Beginning

A good beginning will help you make the audience relax, not to the point of sleeping but to the point of comfort. Start with giving thanks to the people who invited you and to your audience for their attendance. A nice comment about the area, town, or state is always appropriate, but sincerity is a must. I remember receiving a speeding ticket in Indianapolis outside the airport, so in the opening of my speech I made the comment about how kind the people in Indiana were since even the police wanted to personally welcome me to their fine state.

If you are a sports fan, as I am, learn what the local teams are doing. You could open with a comment pertaining to a local player or team.

Or you could talk about local celebrities. I was in Salt Lake City in 2004 during Ken Jennings' reign on *Jeopardy*. At the time, his winning streak was up to 42 games, and I mentioned at the beginning of my talk that I was nervous speaking to the fine people from Salt Lake City because if they were all as intelligent as the *Jeopardy* champ Ken Jennings, I didn't stand a chance to teach them anything new. This was a

compliment to the people of Salt Lake, which made them feel good and thus warmed them to me even before my talk began.

There is a school of thought that you should open your speech with a joke, but let's just say your opening should make people smile. If you need to use a joke because you can't think of anything with a local flavor, be sure it is clean and noninsulting to ANY sector of the universe. People like to hear good things about themselves or their towns more than they like to hear a good joke, but just get them to smile.

## The Speech Itself

You have practiced from your outline and you know your talk cold. Now just get out of the way and let it come out. Look down at your outline when you need to be guided to the next point, but do not panic if you lose your train of thought. You are human, and remember you are standing in front of a group of people who are pulling for you to succeed. So if you have a temporary lapse, just do what I do; I look at the audience, take a visible breath, and say, "I bet this has never happened to you, but I just forgot what I was going to say." They will laugh, which will then give you a moment to find your place.

The entertainment value of your talk is important but more importantly make sure you say 'something'. Time is the most precious commodity in our lives today. My point is that people treasure their time today because it has shrunk down to very few discretionary minutes, if you waste their time, they will not be happy campers.

## A Bang-Up Ending

You had a good opening, a good middle, and now it is time to leave a

final impression. For technical talks you can simply end with a compliment for your audience, saying something like, "Thanks for bearing with me, thanks for paying attention, I'll stick around if you have any additional questions; but make them easy because my brain is as fried as yours."

If you have just presented a motivational talk, you should find an ending story about someone you think of as a hero. It may be a figure in history, but more likely it will be someone with an unrecognizable name who has done something that has moved you.

I like asking people in the audience to tell me who their heroes are and why. It gets people thinking warm thoughts, and the sharing of these thoughts usually leaves everyone in the audience with a great feeling. I remember giving a speech on customer service, and the talk turned to customer service heroics. I asked the question, "Who are your heroes in life?" I wrote each name on a board and asked the person to explain why that hero was selected.

We had the typical answers of Mother Theresa, Jackie Robinson, and Abraham Lincoln. Then a man in the back of the audience of about 400 people raised his hand and he told us that his hero was General MacArthur. As I turned to write MacArthur's name on the board, I asked the man why he had selected him. He said, "Because he got me home." I will never forget how moved the entire group was; it would have been a perfect ending.

Practice your ending story (out loud) more than any other segment of your talk because it will leave that all-important last impression. You want your audience feeling that they have gained something from your words and are thankful that they came.

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## tech forum highlights

# What Else Are You Going to do in a Desert?



Some exhibitors offered prize drawings and other contests to help drive traffic to their booths.



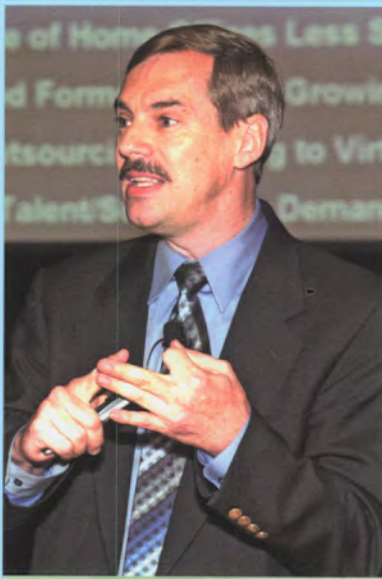
Buyers were learning from the exhibitors all over the Exhibit Showcase.



Eric McNeese of AmeriPoint Title in San Antonio, TX, was the winner of the Grand Prize Plasma TV drawing, sponsored by Reconveyance Services.



The moderator confers with the panel speaking on what customers want today and how title companies need to be ready to provide it.



Stefan Swanepoel gave the Closing General Session on "Keeping Your Competitive Edge." He outlined the top trends currently impacting the real estate industry.



Educational sessions were well attended and participants were actively involved.



Many exhibitors gave demonstrations to show off their software.



Agents from Old Republic show their support for Rande Yeager (center), ALTA's 2005-2006 President, and President & CEO of Old Republic.

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# Serving Today's E-Consumers

The future of the title industry begins with "e:" e-Consumers, e-mortgage, e-sign and e-notary. Is your company prepared to meet the e-demand?

by David W. Moore

Individuals who have been in the title and escrow industry even for a short time, let alone those with many years of experience, have seen drastic changes, especially when it comes to technology. These changes have greatly affected the way we do business. We communicate through e-mail and instant messages. Faxes and e-mails have reduced the need for delivery services. Our phone systems now have recorded messages and advertisements, together with message centers. There are computer software programs to handle almost every aspect of our business. Title reports are uploaded and downloaded, e-mailed, distributed through transaction management systems, and stored on hard drives. Paperless processing of information is becoming the norm, and our customers are demanding more. Although the title and escrow industry has extensively adopted computers and related technologies, we are being torn in many directions and must be able to adapt to new systems and provide services in more

electronic ways to satisfy our customers' needs.

With the expansion of the Internet, access to information has greatly increased and improved our research process. In many areas of the country, title research can now be conducted through an online search process. Many county recorders, clerks, assessors, and treasurers provide information through the Internet. For access to many of these county Web sites all that is required is a simple registration process. Even if there is a charge, in many cases the cost is minimal. By logging onto a Web site, we can now search a parcel of land, obtain information about the property owner, and access other information necessary to produce title insurance and closing documents. Imaged documents have replaced large books and microfilm. We can examine these online documents, produce title reports through various electronic means, and then deliver the report electronically to our client.

Our customer base has also shifted. In addition to local clients, we now work with customers throughout the country. Through technology we can interface with these clients, provide services which were only recently provided face to face, and thus increase our client base and the products we offer. No longer are we restricted by the business environment of our local market.

Historically, borrowers would go to their local bank to apply for a loan. Property owners would contact a local real estate sales agent to sell their house, place a sign on their lawn, or place an ad in a local newspaper. These individuals now find lenders, real estate agents, and others online to accomplish these tasks, many outside our normal regional market.

Competition has also changed. Many other companies are providing alternative and competitive products. Some lenders are no longer requiring title insurance on their loans. Signing services and other service providers compete for our escrow services. The Internet is broadening the competition base, but also allowing our industry to enter other fields and to provide a myriad of new services. With these changes we must understand the changes in the marketplace and be able to better provide for our clients. The only way that this appears to be feasible is through an e-commerce model; e-consumers want e-business.

### E-BUSINESS SOLUTIONS

The Internet and electronic commerce have changed the way business is done. With the Web, the economic structure of business models has changed. An example of this change happened in the early days of the Web. A book publisher decided to put the complete text of



David W. Moore is president, Township Title Insurance Agency, Inc. and the Title & Escrow School, Murray, Utah. This article is an excerpt from his presentation during ALTA'S 2006 Tech Forum. David can be reached at [dwmoores@townshiptitle.com](mailto:dwmoores@townshiptitle.com).

# technology corner

its books on the Internet. Many people thought sales would diminish because no one would buy their books if they could obtain them for free on the Internet. But the opposite happened; their sales increased. The books published by this company were generally college textbooks and research publications. Before the Internet, many of the publisher's clients were reluctant to purchase a book due to the high cost, and without knowing if it would meet their needs. With the text of these books on the Internet, the publishing company determined that its customers were more inclined to purchase the book because they knew the book contained the information they needed. Rather than relying upon a synopsis and not knowing exactly whether the book would contain the information they needed, they could now quickly determine the book's contents. But printing the book on a home computer, using a large amount of toner and a ream of paper was not an appropriate way to use the book. The published book was then a favorable alternative. Thus, the business model of the publishing company changed. They made more information available on their company's Web site, which greatly increased their sales.

## **COMPANY WEB SITES**

The Internet gateway to your company is probably the best place to start when reviewing your e-commerce business plan. What does your Web site do for your company? How are you embracing the Internet and the e-commerce world? The economics of the Internet has also changed the way the real estate world does business. It is estimated that more than 70 percent of the people who are buying homes or refinancing loans are between the ages of 25 and 50. This generation has grown up

with computers and the Internet. They have no problem using the Internet to transact business.

An important part of a title company's Web site is the online order page. These order pages are an effective way of obtaining your orders and interfacing with your lenders clients and customers. They are easy to set up and even easier to maintain. Do a Google search of other title companies to review their order pages and how easy they are to create. The creation of an online order page is just a database input page. You can include functionality that will automatically advise you of the order, will assign it an order number, and will then e-mail your lender or realtor clients, advising them that the order has been received, giving them an order number and thanking them for the order.

*Paperless processing of information is becoming the norm, and our customers are demanding more.*

An effective thing my company has done is to personalize our Web order pages. We have an area of the order form that includes the client's contact information. It is simple for us to take a plain, generic form, add the client's contact information, save the file with a new file name, and upload the page to our Web site. We then e-mail our client the URL for the customized page, which they can bookmark for future use. We will create a customized order page for everyone who could potentially submit an order. If they know we have gone to the trouble of creating a

page for them, they know we appreciate their business.

The delivery and distribution of reports can also be accomplished electronically. Many, if not most, of our clients will accept reports in a paperless format. By e-mail or by transaction management software, the title report is available electronically. Our lender clients are going paperless, so must we. Even if your office is small and you have not invested in title production software, a title report can be prepared through word processing. Create a template for your documents and forms and then fill in the blanks as necessary. The use of merge codes can simplify this process. After the title report is prepared, it can be e-mailed to your client.

Company Web sites can be used in a number of different ways, for both lender clients and consumers.

Companies can place their marketing materials on their Web sites for better and more economical distribution. Fee and rate schedules will give a client and consumers a better understanding of your charges. Pictures and a biographical sketch of your key employees are an effective way of introducing your clients and consumers to your staff. Other information for consumers may include a description of your services, necessary information to bring to a closing, and calculators to determine mortgage payments. The list of things that you can place on your

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company's Web site is only limited by your imagination.

## E-MORTGAGES

The e-mortgage is finally a reality. For years we have heard that electronic documents will be accepted and become the standard means of completing a real estate transaction. However, we are still in an infancy stage. Many mortgage lenders are experimenting with e-mortgages. Many different procedures need to be implemented for the signing, storage, and distribution of e-mortgages. This was a hot topic at the 2006 ALTA Tech Forum. Fannie Mae even held a couple of focus group meetings to review and discuss the implementation of e-mortgages. There was a lot of information gathered and exchanged.

As our lender clients begin adapting to this format, how are we going to process these types of closings? As the e-mortgage process may vary from lender to lender, we must be able to adapt and handle each situation. Many title companies now receive their closing documents through e-mail or some other electronic means. These documents are printed, signed, and returned as paper documents to the lender. With e-mortgages, documents will be signed and acknowledged through some form of electronic signature and returned to the lender electronically. This will take some changes in our production process. How are you going to prepare your closing documents to be added to this e-mortgage package? How are you going to have them signed, notarized, and returned? There is still much work to be done to make this an effective and comfortable closing for our clients.

One concern with e-mortgages is how consumers will accept them?

Will they feel comfortable reviewing the documents on a computer screen? With all the news about loan fraud and identity theft, will our lenders and borrowers embrace this e-mortgage world? But as the retail marketplace has adapted to an e-commerce model, so borrowers should be able to adapt to the use of computers screens and signature pads in the closing of a real estate transaction. Nobody questions the use of a signature pad when using their credit card at Wal Mart. However, we must be able to keep all of our clients comfortable through a transition period.

## E-CLOSING, E-SIGNING, AND E-NOTARY

Since many of the closing documents need to be signed and acknowledged by a notary, e-closing, e-signing, and e-notary are extensively intertwined. Through federal laws, it is now possible to have real estate documents signed electronically. In conjunction with the state laws that

of digital signatures is the use of security passwords and encryption software. Secure computer Web sites are used for e-commerce transactions, which store the information necessary to validate the electronic transaction. However, for real estate this format does not place the normal signature on the documents. The resulting documents have the normal text information but not the nice calligraphy form of the signature, which makes the document look nice. With a digital signature there is a "private" code (password) that is used to execute the document. Through encryption software a digital signature, or code statement, is placed on the documents usually at the beginning and at the end. This digital signature code appears to be a mishmash of letters, numbers, and symbols. Through the use of a "public" code, the validity of the document can be ascertained. If any changes have been made to the document after it was digitally signed, even if a single space

*As our lender clients begin adapting to this format, how are we going to process these types of closings?*

govern notaries public, documents can be completed in an electronic format. To be able to close electronically has both advantages and disadvantages. For the most part, documents still need to be reviewed, approved, signed, and acknowledged. With e-commerce, all that is really changing is the visual presentation of the documents and the structure used to affix a signature.

There has been some experimentation with digital signatures for real estate transactions. The basic process

is added, the public code would report an error.

After the digital signing process, and as required for real estate documents, the electronically signed documents must be recorded. However the software and process necessary to accomplish this task has never fully been implemented. A digitally signed document does not appear to have a signature, rather only the digital signature represented by a code statement. Most real estate professionals do not recognize the



Where's Susan?

We used to be so close.

Doing title forms for hours and hours.

Together.

It was really great. At least I was happy.

Now I spend a lot of time alone.

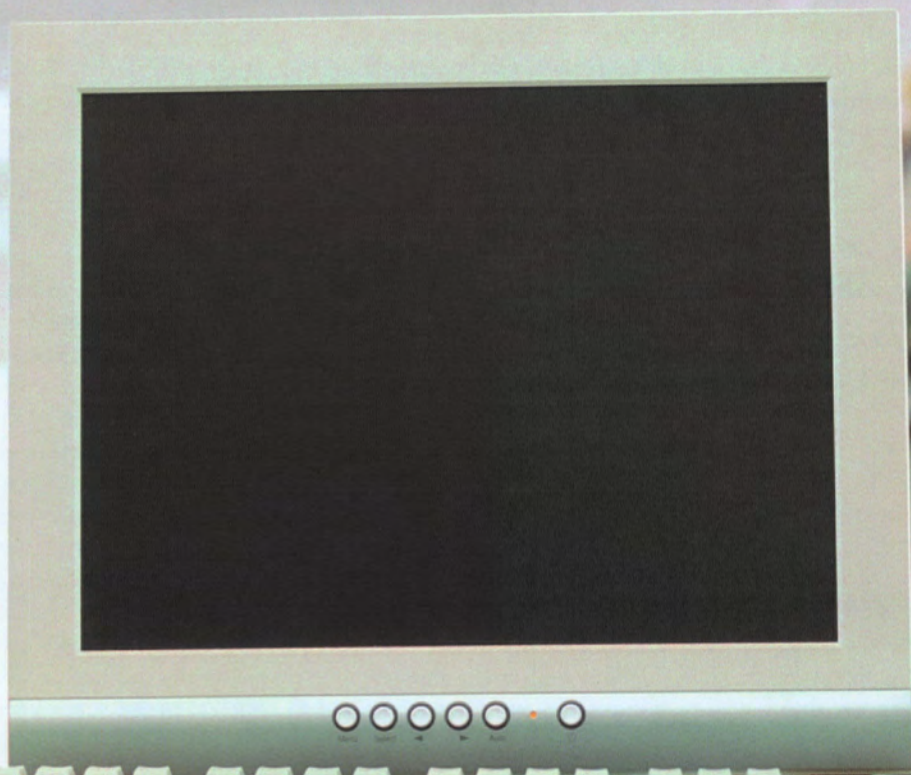
Susan is always with her clients.

"Oh, let me take care of that for you, Brian."

"Hey Lisa, let's meet for lunch."

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documents as being signed.

The real estate industry still likes to see the calligraphy form of the signature. To facilitate the appearance of this normal type of signature, the real estate industry has moved in another direction. With the use of signature pads, real estate documents can be signed, then acknowledged. This process places the signature on the document electronically, and it appears to have the calligraphy signature we have all come to trust. Because of the e-recording systems that many counties have implemented, this form of digital signature is readily acceptable.

An essential part of the e-closing process is the notarization of the

is required because the notary's seal cannot be affixed to an electronic document.

### E-RECORDING

There are more than 90 counties across the country that are now accepting documents for recording purposes in an electronic format. While these systems may have some variation, their procedures and practices are similar. With the use of electronic recording, documents are delivered to the recorder's office through an electronic process. Because the documents are already in a digital image format, the recorders can save money because they don't have to scan the documents for

them electronically to the recorder's office. The documents automatically go into a recording queue. If someone records in person at the recorder's office, they log onto a computer in the recorder's office and are placed in the appropriate sequence in the recording queue. When it is time to record, the county recorder's staff reviews the documents to verify they meet the legal standards necessary for recorded documents. If approved, the documents receive an electronic stamp that contains the recording information. If they are not approved, the title company receives a message on the Web page. After recording, the title company receives the recording information placed on the documents. The documents are immediately available on the recorder's Web site. The average time from beginning to end for this e-recording process is much shorter than the old-fashioned way. No one leaves the office, and we fulfill the recording process in a more effective manner for our clients. Recording fees are handled either with a recording account with the county recorder or with the e-recording company.

E-commerce is here, and the e-consumer is waiting for us to implement the changes required by this new way of doing business. As a title and escrow industry we have the ability to provide our lender and consumer customers with an effective electronic commerce system. Using Web sites, computer technology, and various distribution systems, the title and escrow process can be accomplished in a more efficient and economical manner. Keeping up with the technology advances of e-commerce is essential if title companies are going to survive and thrive in the world of the e-consumer.

*Using Web sites, computer technology, and various distribution systems, the title and escrow process can be accomplished in a more efficient and economical manner.*

document. Various states have taken different approaches to this matter. Two different approaches have been implemented. The first format is the creation of an "e-notary." This is a special category for a notary public. Once a person becomes a notary public under the laws of their state, he or she can complete a process to become an "e-notary." This empowers them to complete an acknowledgment of an electronic document in an e-notary format.

The other system of electronic notarization is to allow all notaries public to execute an e-notary. This system has different requirements because of the e-sign process. These requirements generally require additional information to be placed on the document, such as the notary's appointment or certificate number. This additional information

archival purposes, and the title company can more timely and economically handle this type of recording.

The e-recording approach has been in use for a few years. It has been found to save time, and title companies can better manage the documents after recording. Today, rather than having a recording clerk spend hours at the recorder's office waiting in line to record, with an e-recording system, the entire recording process can be accomplished in the office with just a fraction of the time previously required.

The process for e-recording is basically as follows. When the documents are ready for recording, the title company's recording clerk logs onto the e-recording company's Web site. The clerk scans the documents to be recorded and send

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# Transaction Management Offers a Competitive Advantage

As title companies use this new technology, they realize the benefits for themselves and their lender and Realtor® customers.

by Joyce Weiland

**M**ost real estate-related companies are aware of the advantages of online transaction management and “the paperless office”—from less paper, less faxing, and less phoning to lower costs and higher productivity.

These convenient Web-based systems enable everyone involved in a transaction to communicate and view documents at any time.

Agents, lenders, title companies, and attorneys who use these systems claim they are able to close more deals, more efficiently.

Although the benefits have been widely touted, there is still resistance to adopting the technology. Some companies have clients with a stated preference for traditional one-on-one contact or who absolutely refuse to join the information

age. Others don't want to invest too early in a technology that might be replaced by something better next year. Many people simply don't want to change the way they work or can't seem to correlate the value these applications offer with the costs involved to deploy these systems.

With technology becoming more and more instrumental to business processes, the majority of real estate professionals who

*Although the benefits of transaction management systems have been widely touted, there is still resistance to adopting the technology.*

do move to a paperless environment will likely leave everyone else at a competitive disadvantage. This may or may not end up being true—but many companies who have embraced the technology and have become early, active users are finding that their online transaction management systems are actually giving them a competitive edge.

### SECURING NEW CUSTOMERS

“We have people who come to us specifically for this technology,” says Liz Davis, vice president of operations for the Northwest Title family of companies. “It's a form of customer service that our competition doesn't provide.”

While the technology has been adopted by a full spectrum of Northwest Title clients, Davis says that attorneys are among their most active users.

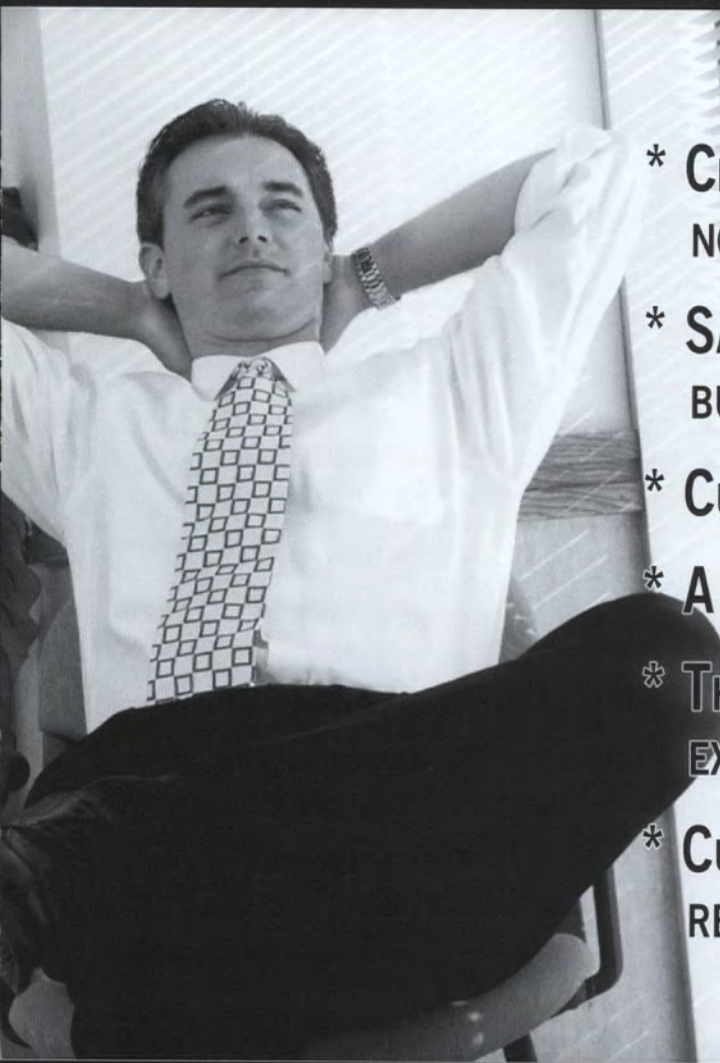
“Attorneys love it because it provides secure document delivery. A fax can sit for days in a basket. E-mails can be intercepted. With our system, nobody can see your document without a password, and you can instantly find it whenever you want it.”

Northwest Title also posts documents for lenders and real estate agents. “Realtors are busy people who are often out showing houses until fairly late at



Joyce Weiland is COO of SoftPro, in Raleigh, NC. She can be reached at 800-848-0143.

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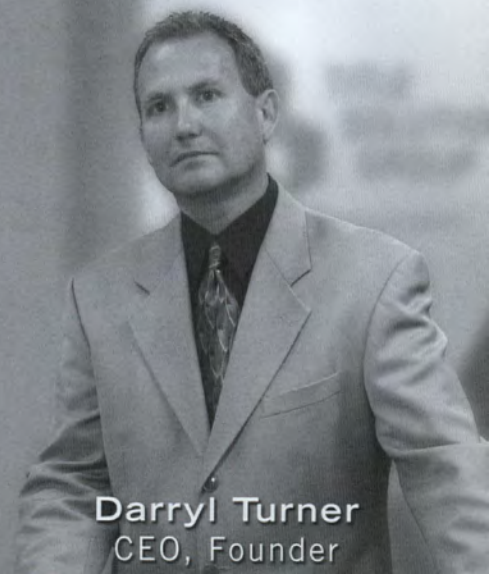
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## Transaction Management Vendors

Here are some of the vendors offering transaction management systems. In addition, according to a recent technology survey done by the National Association of Realtors, real estate firms are offering their own transaction management systems, competing directly with TMS vendors and title companies.

Closers Choice	RamQuest Software, Inc.
USA Digital Solutions (DSI)	RBJ
First American-Agent Technology Solutions	Hall Settlement Systems, LLC
First Data Systems, Inc.	Settlement Room
Gators	SoftPro
Granite Software, Inc.	TitleSoft
hal Systems Corporation	TSS Software Corporation
LandTech	Virtual Desktop, Inc.

night,” notes Davis. “With this tool, they can come home and log on to check out what’s happened during the day.”

“It’s cut down enormously on the amount of phone tag we used to play. Instead of calling to find out if a survey’s been ordered or a fax has been received, they can go online at anytime to check status, review documents, make comments, or give approvals. It saves a tremendous amount of time.”

Ultimately though, Davis feels that Northwest Title’s sales and customer service teams have seen the best results from the system. “It hasn’t changed the nature of what we do or our basic work flow, but it’s been a real enhancement to the services we’ve always offered.”

### THE BASIS OF A MARKETING CAMPAIGN

At Weissman, Nowack, Curry & Wilco, one of the largest law firms in Atlanta, the benefits and availability of their transaction management system is something they actively market to area real

estate agents and lenders.

“Other companies in Atlanta have similar systems, but they aren’t using them anywhere near as extensively as we are,” says Marla Singletary, real estate training coordinator. “We automatically post to everybody whether they request it or not.”

According to Singletary, once clients try it, they’re sold on the ease of being able to go to the site anytime, day or night. “It’s also an enormous advantage to us internally to not have to take 12 or 15 calls on the same file to see whether taxes have been paid, title has been cleared, or payoff is in. Most people are happy to just go to the site and check for themselves.”

While the firm still has some clients who “want nothing to do with e-mail or electronic documents,” Singletary is convinced that online transaction management is the wave of the future, “We all know that eventually everything will be electronic, and we wanted to be on the cutting edge.”

Within the next month

Weissman, Nowack, Curry & Wilco plans to mail a brochure touting the benefits of its online transaction management system to area Realtors®, “We know our current customers like what we’re doing with it. It’s something our competition doesn’t have, and we’re going to start marketing it big time.”

### LENDING CONVENIENCE

Lytle Title in Virginia implemented its transaction management system in October of 2004. They make the system available to buyers, sellers, lenders, and Realtors® who can all log on to check the status of their transactions with a secured password.

While everyone involved in Lytle Title transactions is able to take advantage of the online system, general manager Connie Thomas says the system is particularly attractive to lenders. In fact, their Web site features a quote from Teresa Rutherford, a loan officer at Wells Fargo who stated, “We love working with your staff, and think your state-of-the-art online TransactionPoint closing tool is terrific.”

### WAIT AND SEE MIGHT NOT WORK

The companies who are using a “wait and see” strategy to avoid investing too early or in the wrong technology may actually pay a higher price in the long run for not hopping on board with their competitors. With a number of mature and proven products available today, companies who embrace this cost-saving and productivity-enhancing technology now may cement client relationships that those who waited will have missed.

# member news

## Movers & Shakers

### CALIFORNIA



**Kathy Brolin** has been named executive vice president, regional manager for Old Republic Title Holding Company, Inc., Walnut Creek.

Brolin began her career with Founders/Old Republic Title in Alameda County in 1976. Most recently she was senior vice president/Alameda County manager.

### CONNECTICUT

**Amanda Zuretti** has been appointed title counsel for CATIC's Wellesley, MA office. Prior to this appointment, Zuretti served as CATIC agency representative to law firms in eastern MA and was a sole practitioner in Ashland.

### HAWAII



**Jason Y. Chun** has been named president and chief executive officer of Island Title Corporation, Honolulu, a majority-owned subsidiary of First American Title. Chun

joined First American in 1999 as associate counsel in the national legal department at the company's home office in CA. Most recently he was vice president and chief operating officer of the company's Los Angeles County operations.

### MASSACHUSETTS



**Mary Beth Costello** has been named branch manager and counsel for Ticor Title, Woburn. Costello brings ten years of experience in the title industry to the position.

Most recently she was an operations manager with Capital Title Corporation in Okemos, MI.

### PENNSYLVANIA



**Lisa Donahue** has been promoted to assistant vice president for client relations for the GATORS® line of Fiserv Lending Solutions' General American Corporation (GAC). Previously she managed the Best Practices Group.

### TEXAS



**Jeff Webb** has been promoted to senior vice president – commercial services for the Southwest Region for LandAmerica Financial Group, Inc., Houston. Webb has 22 years of experience in the commercial real estate industry and had been serving the company as vice president – commercial manager for LandAmerica Commonwealth Title of Houston.

## Mergers & Acquisitions

**First American Residential Group**, a member of the First American Corporation, Santa Ana, CA, has acquired privately held Sonic Eagle, Inc., a provider of enterprise broker and real estate agent productivity technology, Pleasant Hill, CA.

**United General Title Insurance Company**, a subsidiary of First American, Denver, CO, announced that it will acquire Raleigh, N.C.-based Attorneys Title Insurance Agency and its offices in seven cities across North Carolina.

## New Offices

Monroe Title Insurance Corporation, Rochester, NY, has opened a new office in Chautauqua County.

# NEW ALTA MEMBERS

## ACTIVE MEMBERS

### Colorado

**Dakota Homestead of Colorado**  
Troy Reingardt  
Denver

### Mile High Title Research

Shannon Grote  
Westminster

### Connecticut

**Classic Title, LLC**  
John Kavanagh  
Greenwich

### Clear Title Service

Theresa Carruthers  
Wallingford

### Peter DeLuca

Monroe

### deVars, LLC

Lawrence DeVars  
New London

### District of Columbia

**String Investment Solutions, Inc.**  
Jamal Strong  
Washington

### Florida

**American Research & Notary Services, Inc.**  
Sherry Sapier  
Mount Dora

### Dominion Title Corp. - Jacksonville

Mike Bogart  
Jacksonville

### Heritage Title Insurance Agency

Reesa Watson  
Fort Lauderdale

### Okaloosa Walton Title, Inc.

Jennifer Helmich  
Crestview

### Old Floresta Title & Escrow, LLC

Theodore Simon  
Boca Raton

# NEW ALTA MEMBERS

## Florida cont.

### Palm State Title of Florida, LLC

Patricia Carroll  
Lake Mary

### Priority Title Services, Inc.

Angel Wagner  
Miami

### Professional Closing, Inc.

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Palm Coast

### Professional Realty Services, LLC

Emanuel Goldszmidt  
Aventura

### Professional Title Services of Orlando, LLC

Cindy Egeli  
Orlando

### The Cosmopolitan Title Group, LL

Jesika Diaz  
Miami

## Georgia

### DNRaye Title Services

David Emerson  
Canton

### Evergreen Title & Abstract, LLC

Rachael Iverson  
Alpharetta

### Friend Real Estate Consulting

Donna Friend  
Lakemont

### GA Title Services

Kim Goodman  
Austell

### Georgia Titles Unlimited

Todd Haag  
Lawrenceville

### J & R Bigham, Inc.

Jean Bigham  
Columbus

### James C. Lamb, III

Flowery Branch

### Martin Tanner & Associates, Inc.

Martin Tanner  
Kennesaw

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### City Suburban Title

Mark Norris  
Des Plaines

### CJL Title Services

Joseph Lynch  
New Lenox

### Odyssey Title Agency, Inc.

Patricia Weinstein  
Wheaton

### Resource Title, Inc.

Pawel Wcislo  
Chicago

## Indiana

### Beechwood Searching Services, Inc.

Teresa Stephens  
Fort Wayne

### Rightway Title Abstraction, Inc.

Kevin Green  
Valparaiso

### Ringham Real Estate Title Services

Carol Ringham  
Newburgh

## Kansas

### Alliance Title, LLC

Barney Collins  
Wichita

## Kentucky

### Malcolm Combs

London

### Express Title Services, LLC

Charles Turner  
Louisville

### Homeland Title Company, LLC

Sheila Spradlin  
Somerset

## Massachusetts

### SJR Titles

Steven Ruffino  
Medford

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### Astute Abstracts, LLC

Agnes Taiwo  
Gaithersburg

### CBF Business Solutions, Inc.

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Frederick

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Brandy Francis  
Temple Hills

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Geary Francis  
Timonium

### SolidRock, LLC

Tolu Oriyomi  
Severn

### The South Mountain Group, Inc.

Ellen Leiby  
Jefferson

## Michigan

### Advantage Title & Escrow Agency Inc.

Sandra Peck  
Hastings

### All Points Title Agency, LLC

Barbara Delmoral  
Richmond

### Atlantic Title Agency, Inc.

John Kendall  
Grand Rapids

### Complete Title Agency of East Michigan

Jack Miller  
Fenton

### Excel Title Agency, LLC

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Huntington Woods

### Michigan Tax Titles, Inc.

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Kalamazoo

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Fergus Falls

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Detroit Lakes

### SWMN Title & Closing, LLC

Joshua Reisetter  
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Rolla

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Durham

**CMAC of Charlotte Corp**  
Charles Jones  
Matthews

**Diana N. Francis**  
Pisgah Forest

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Winston Salem

**Regional Title Agency**  
Thomas Rybak  
Kernersville

**Unique Abstractor**  
Shelny Johnson  
Charlotte

## **Nebraska**

**360 Title**  
Neil Feldhacker  
Omaha

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Brielle

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Dora Barrena  
East Brunswick

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**Donefast Abstract, LLC**  
Mary-Ellen Graziano  
Riverhead

**Maximus Title, LLC**  
Julia Kirby  
New York

**Northern Eagle Abstract**  
John Imhof  
Cambridge

**Search Fast Abstract, LLC**  
Daisy Riva  
Huntington Station

**Sound Title Agency**  
Thomas Goldsmith  
Northport

**Wall Street Title Service, Inc.**  
Andrew Ham  
Douglaston

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Alan Shind  
Cleveland

**Terry K. Brassington, Jr.**  
Dayton

**Kling Enterprises**  
Michael Kling  
Kettering

**Ohio Real Title Agency, LLC**  
Ryan Marrie  
Cleveland

**Precision Title Agency, Inc.**  
Bruce Cweiber  
Cleveland

## **Pennsylvania**

**Cornerstone Search  
& Abstract, Inc.**  
Thomas Puleo  
Blue Bell

## **Rhode Island**

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Gail Buccafurri  
Johnston

**Freedom Title & Escrow Services,  
LLC**  
Christopher Johnson  
Warwick

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Nashville

**JoAnne J. King**  
Nolensville

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Austin

**Title Team of Texas, LLC**  
Karen Bone  
Hurst

## **Utah**

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Lincoln Scoffield  
Midvale

## **Virginia**

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Alexandria

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Roanoke

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LLC**  
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Portsmouth

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Chesapeake

**BOC Title of Hampton Roads**  
C. Sabol  
Norfolk

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Richmond

**June Casas**  
Virginia Beach

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David Davenport  
Warsaw

**Dominion Abstract & Title**  
Gloria Wright  
Richmond

**Elizabeth River Title, LLC**  
Stewart Sacks  
Chesapeake

**Grace Title, Inc.**  
Grace Titus-Wilkins  
Chesapeake

**Great Alliance Title & Escrow, LLC**  
Lilian Rodriguez  
Vienna

### Virginia cont.

**JBS Title & Escrow, LLC**  
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Chantilly

**Net Title & Escrow, LLC**  
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Newport News

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Heathsville

**Premier Title, Inc.**  
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Vienna

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Christopher Gardner  
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**Virtual Title & Escrow, LLC**  
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Centreville

**Washington**  
**Evergreen Note Servicing**  
Staci Torres  
Puyallup

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Oostburg

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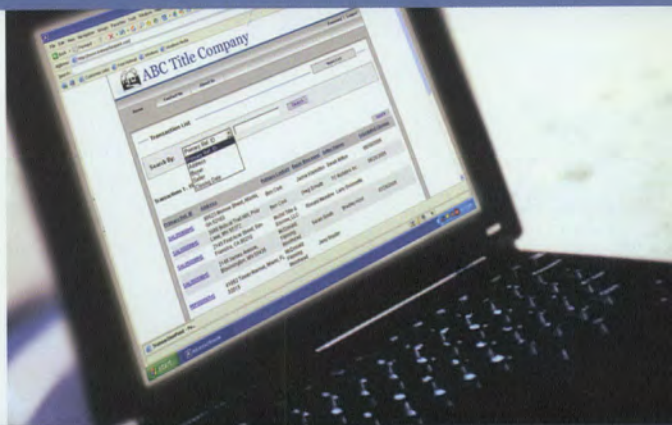
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