March 2015

TitleNews

Official Publication of the
American Land Title Association

Social Media Best Practices: The Nitty-gritty of Compliance

While Social Media is a Powerful Marketing Tool, There are Rules to the Road


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INFORMATION IS NEEDED.
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2015 ALTA FORUMS & CONFERENCES

March 26	RESPA-TILA Forum *Chicago, IL*
April 16	RESPA-TILA Forum *Washington, D.C.*
May 18 - 20	Federal Conference *Washington, D.C.*
October 7 - 10	Annual Convention *Boston*

STATE CONFERENCES

April 9-11	Tennessee *Memphis, Tenn.*
April 17-18	Oklahoma *Norman, Okla.*
April 19-21	California *Monterey Bay, Calif.*
April 23-24	Palmetto *Greenville, S.C.*

TitleNews

PUBLISHER
Michelle L. Korsmo

EDITOR IN CHIEF
Jeremy Yohe

COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER
Shawn Sullivan

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from the publisher's desk

Uncertainty Not Good for Viewing Cherry Blossoms or Conducting Business

The spring blooming of the cherry blossom trees in Washington, D.C., is a remarkable sight. ALTA President Diane Evans and I were talking about coordinating one of her trips to D.C. with the cherry blossoms, which is difficult to plan. In fact, it is rare that the parade and activities of the Cherry Blossom Festival coordinate with the peak blooming of the trees.

More than 1,500 Cherry Blossom trees each spring explode into a beautiful display of color along Washington, D.C.'s Tidal Basin. The peak bloom period lasts only a few days and typically comes around the end of March or beginning of April. When it happens varies each year depending on the temperature. To compensate for the uncertainty, the best thing to do is to gather information and stay abreast of changes as you plan your visit to the cherry blossoms.

Uncertainty isn't good in business either. Vagueness in requirements and ambiguity in regulations raise costs, affect competition and ultimately harm consumers. Due to regulatory compliance concerns, we are hearing that many title companies are merging or considering shutting up shop. We'd like to hear what's going on in your market. You can share comments at *communications@alta.org*.

Like knowing when the cherry blossoms will bloom, the best way to be prepared for regulatory change is to keep informed. This is where you can rely on ALTA and your state land title associations to provide guidance and information.

Whether it is industry acceptance of ALTA's Best Practices and what proof of compliance lenders will require, or questions and concerns about the CFPB's integrated mortgage disclosures, ALTA staff is dedicated to arming members with the latest information.

We recognize that adapting to the new requirements will be challenging. ALTA endeavors to make the transition into the new regulatory regime as painless as possible. Tools such as ALTA's Best Practices are designed to help you navigate these uncertain waters to put yourself in the best position for success.

To help members develop a clear picture of expectations, ALTA is encouraging the CFPB to provide more written guidance on how to comply with the regulations for the new disclosures and to exercise the same restrained enforcement that HUD followed during the last reform in 2010. Then, HUD provided the industry a four-month cushion before considering any action against companies that demonstrated they were making a good-faith effort to comply with the new GFE and HUD-1. HUD also asked other federal and state enforcement agencies to exercise the same 120-day restraint in enforcement.

Instead of allowing these changes to harm our industry, I urge you all to stay involved with ALTA and seize the opportunity to demonstrate the determination and resilience that defines our industry. If you do, I'm sure business will continue to blossom!

— Michelle Korsmo, ALTA chief executive officer

Two More Companies Named ALTA Elite Providers

ALTA announced that it has named Pershing Yoakley & Associates (PYA) and RamQuest as Elite Providers.

ALTA's Elite Provider Program is comprised of premier service providers committed to offering comprehensive benefits to the title insurance and settlement services industry. Elite Providers promote the highest industry standards and provide effective solutions for ALTA members' critical needs.

RamQuest enables title and settlement operations to be competitively superior with products that include fully integrated land title closing, escrow accounting, imaging, transaction management and digital marketplace solutions.

As an ALTA Elite Provider, RamQuest offers new customers that are American Land Title Association members 25 percent off software implementation fees (approximately a $500 discount) and a complimentary two-year RamQuest User Group (RQUG) membership for one individual. The cost of RQUG membership is $50 per year and the benefits include: opportunity to contribute to the development of future RamQuest products by suggesting and prioritizing enhancements and features for new releases; access to the Member Area of *RQUG.org* to participate in online user forums, and gain access to exclusive RQUG member resources including RQUG Member and Committee Directories; and a $50 discount on RQUG Annual Conference registration.

PYA is a certified public accounting and consulting firm that assists title and settlement companies with the implementation and certification of ALTA's Best Practices Framework. For over three decades, PYA has provided support and delivered services in compliance, assurance and advisory to their clients. PYA's Best Practices Team helps companies with a range of services from efficiently and effectively adopting clear and concise policies and procedures that cover ALTA's Best Practices Framework to obtaining certification.

As an ALTA Elite Provider, PYA offers ALTA members a complimentary evaluation of a company's ALTA Best Practices policies and procedures (a $300 value).

For more information about the program or to apply, visit ALTA's Elite Provider website at *www.alta.org/elite*.

Mortgage Choice Act Reintroduced in Congress

U.S. Rep. Bill Huizenga (R-Mich.) in February reintroduced the Mortgage Choice Act.

Identical to the Mortgage Choice Act of 2013, the legislation would modify the definition of points and fees in the Dodd-Frank Act's Ability to Repay/Qualified Mortgage (QM) provisions.

Under the QM provisions, the total points and fees paid to a lender are limited to 3 percent of the loan amount. Under existing law, fees paid to a title company owned by the lender are considered fees paid to the lender and are included in the 3-percent cap.

The debate over the 3-percent cap has spurred criticism about title insurance. Opponents of this legislation criticize the title industry and call for reform. It is important that Congress has facts about the title insurance and real estate settlement business. Since ALTA members have a variety of opinions about affiliated businesses, it is appropriate that ALTA has not advocated for or against the legislation. At the same time, ALTA is responsive to member requests for advice on how they can advocate on the legislation and to ensure that Congress has accurate information about the industry.

ALTA Urges CFPB to Improve Consumer Complaint Portal

ALTA submitted a letter on Feb. 2 to the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) encouraging the bureau to modify the type of information that will be collected from companies for its consumer complaint database.

"ALTA supports the goals of the consumer complaint database by enabling companies to resolve issues quickly and efficiently," said Michelle Korsmo, ALTA's chief operating officer. "ALTA believes the portal may help businesses respond more quickly to complaints by ensuring that all necessary software and security protocols are already in place before a complaint is even received."

In December, the CFPB published a notice in the Federal Register indicating it is developing a form to allow companies to "proactively participate" in its online portal for viewing and responding to consumer complaints. According to the notice, the CFPB's "Company Portal Boarding Form" will streamline the collection of information from companies seeking to register to use the company portal.

However, the form requests a large amount of information from companies, which makes it difficult to join the portal. As an example, the form requires companies to submit the tax ID and state business licenses for every "subsidiary or affiliate" of the company. Some of these "subsidiaries or affiliates" may be outside of the purview of the CFPB because they do not provide financial services.

"The bureau should modify its form to request information only about business activities that involve financial services to reduce the information requested by the form and to make it easier for companies to comply with the bureau's information request," said Korsmo in the letter.

Additionally, ALTA wants the CFPB to clarify how it plans to review consumer complaints and detail how it plans to communicate with companies following the submission of a complaint.

cfpb Consumer Financial Protection Bureau

Law Protecting Tenants from Eviction Due to Foreclosure Expires

A law that protected tenants from immediate eviction by new owners of residential property after a foreclosure expired as of Dec. 31, 2014.

Originally passed on May 20, 2009, and extended by the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act, the Protecting Tenants at Foreclosure Act of 2009 provided protection in the case of any foreclosure on a "federally related mortgage loan" or on any dwelling or residential real property.

The law provided that "any immediate successor in interest" in such a foreclosed property, including a bank that takes title to a house upon foreclosure, will assume the interest subject to the rights of any bona fide tenant and will need to comply with certain notice requirements. Under this law, the immediate successor in interest of a dwelling or residential real property must provide tenants with a notice to vacate at least 90 days before the effective date of such notice.

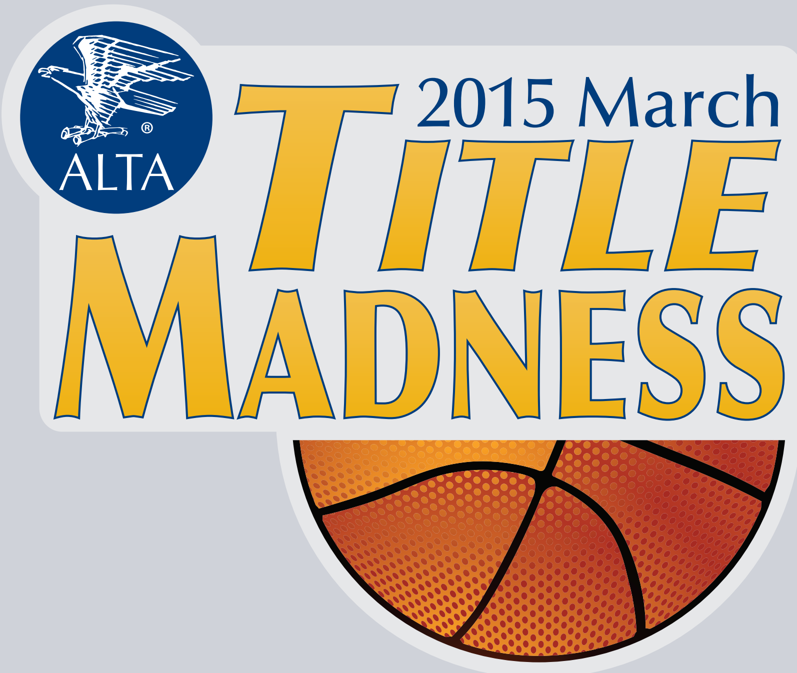
The date of a "notice of foreclosure" is defined as the date on which complete title to a property is transferred to a successor entity or a person as a result of a court order or pursuant to provisions in a mortgage, deed of trust or security deed.

Two bills, S.1761 and H.R. 3543, which would have provided a permanent extension of the tenant protections, were introduced during last Congress, but neither gained traction. As of yet, nothing in regard to renewing the Protecting Tenants at Foreclosure Act has been filed in the 114th Congress. ALTA will monitor any changes.

Keep Your ALTA Record Updated

ALTA has established the ALTA Universal ID to help lenders and vendors confidently identify a settlement agent across industry databases.

ALTA's database for membership, licensees, and other industry entities stores contact information for companies and individuals. Each company is assigned a unique ALTA ID – now the ALTA Universal ID. Review your company record and make updates by March 30, 2015. Learn more at *www.alta.org/universalid*.



March Title Madness – Bigger than Ever

Visit ALTA's social media pages March 17-April 6 to participate in our 2015 March Title Madness social media trivia contest! We'll post two industry trivia questions every other day on Facebook and Twitter. Each individual that submits (via comments and tweets) a correct trivia answer will receive entry toward our grand prizes for #MarchTitleMadness. The winners will be announced on Tuesday, April 7. All correct answers will be awarded points so you must answer often to win the prizes. Additionally, bonus point opportunities will be announced throughout the contest.

Grand prize is a $50 American Express gift card. The winner will be chosen via a lottery system of all individuals who submit correct answers. The more questions you answer correctly, the more entries you receive. We will also award a $25 iTunes gift card to the person who answers the most questions correctly the course of the contest. In the event of a tie, the individuals will go head-to-head with additional trivia questions until a winner is crowned.

If you have title industry trivia questions that will stump your colleagues, submit your ideas to *social@alta.org*. Each individual that emails a possible trivia question will receive one additional entry for the grand prize. Use #MarchTitleMadness on Twitter to follow the conversation.

Attend ALTA's SMS via Livestream!

ALTA's Social Media Summit is being offered via livestream for ALTA members for $75 per office location. To purchase your livestream subscription, please visit *www.alta.org/socialsummit*. The cost is $125 for non-ALTA members. All livestream subscriptions for the Social Media Summit must be purchased by 5 p.m. Eastern on Friday, March 13 with zero exceptions. Questions? Email us at *social@alta.org*.

Ways We Love Title

In February, ALTA hosted #28Ways We Love Title on Facebook and Twitter. We received many submissions for reasons why our members love this industry. One of the best came from Jenny Hill, senior escrow officer at First American Title Insurance Co. in Albuquerque, N.M.

Hill, who is celebrating her 30th anniversary in the industry, said: "The transactions that give me the most joy are the Neighborhood Stabilization home sales. These are foreclosures that are rehabilitated and sold, using funds provided by HUD, to lower income families and individuals who may not otherwise have been able to afford these homes. They are often long and difficult transactions, but the closings are a celebration! We are blessed to be an integral part of the homeownership process and when I find myself feeling overwhelmed, I remember these closings and I know in my heart that I am helping make dreams come true!"

Getting ready is good. Preparing for growth is better.

August 1 marks the beginning of a transformed marketplace. Embrace the opportunity presented by the TILA-RESPA Integrated Disclosures (TRID) to move your business forward and prosper.

First American Title can help position you for growth today.

- First American employees trained on TRID detail, ready to share their expertise
- Reference material to educate and guide your agency
- Materials you can provide your referral sources to share your knowledge

Enhance your competitive advantage.
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Social Media Best Practices: The Nitty-gritty of Compliance

While Social Media is a Powerful Marketing Tool, There are Rules to the Road

Consumers use social media every day. That means there's untapped potential to grow market share and enhance your brand. According to the Pew Research Center, the percentage of online adults who use social networking sites has continued to rise steadily over the past several years. As of January 2014, 74 percent of all online adults use at least one social networking site. Highlighting the proliferating use, more homebuyers are turning to social media. >>

By Jeremy Yohe


You
Tube

A 2014 survey by the California Association of Realtors showed that more than 75 percent (up from 52 percent in 2011) of homebuyers used social media in their home search. Your business partners use social media as well. A survey from the National Association of Realtors revealed 91 percent of Realtors use social media professionally to some extent. A recent study by The Financial Brand showed that 46 percent of banks are on Facebook and 35 percent use Twitter. While social media is a powerful networking tool, there are rules.

Go Where Your Customers Are

According to a survey conducted in November 2013 by LinkedIn and TNS of nearly 1,000 North American small- and medium-sized businesses (SMBs) with revenue between $1 million and less than $50 million, there is a correlation between a company's social media engagement and financial performance. Of the companies surveyed, 94 percent use social media to market their business and 90 percent find it to be a highly effective way to maintain brand presence.

Joe Powell, area counsel for Fidelity National Title Group in Alabama, Mississippi and Arkansas, actively uses Twitter to share industry news. He says title professionals must communicate and be visible on channels that their customers use because it's a free way to reach them with their message and brand.

"I routinely post helpful tips, short articles or interesting pictures about title—but other things as well—all in order to be interesting," said Powell, adding that his company has received title orders due to social media.

Powell's advice to achieving success on social media is to avoid posting too frequently and to post about other subjects than title insurance "so connections can realize you may have more in common than title insurance."

"But you shouldn't reveal trade secrets about your company, and don't cross the line with free promotions," Powell said.

Cynthia McGovern, chief executive officer of Orange Leaf Consulting, says title professionals need to remember that while social media will never replace personal relationships, it can help shorten the sales cycle in creating a relationship.

"It is important for social media to be seen as a marketing tool not a sales tool," she said. "Marketing is brand and name recognition. Sales is relationship building."

Whether a company ventured into the social media realm years ago or is just now dipping its toes in the water, the risks need to be weighed against the benefits. Commonly, a company's social media efforts are spearheaded by marketing or other business teams with little or no input from the information technology and compliance departments. This can leave an organization susceptible to non-compliance.

TitleTopics: Social Media Best Practices: The Nitty-gritty of Compliance

Building a Strategy

In order to build a business case for social media, the report "Auditing Social Media – A Governance and Risk Guide," says a comprehensive strategy must be aligned to business objectives and combined with policies and procedures that mitigate risk. A strategic plan "recognizes that the purpose of social media is to develop relationships and use the appropriate social technologies to leverage connections and conversations between real people, and it involves a new level of commitment to learning and collaboration. A true social media strategy has the greatest ability to support the achievement of business objectives."

In December 2013, the Federal Financial Institutions Examination Council (FFIEC) issued guidance to help financial institutions understand potential consumer compliance and legal risks associated with the use of social media, along with expectations for managing those risks.

The FFIEC defines social media as "a form of interactive online communication in which users can generate and share content through text, images, audio, and/or video." Examples include Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Yelp. Emails and text messages not sent through a social media platform are excluded from the FFIEC definition.

Elizabeth Khalil, senior policy analyst at the Federal Deposit Insurance Corp., said the guidance does not create or impose any new regulatory requirements.

"The key message is that existing consumer protection and compliance laws and regulations that would apply to a given activity continue to apply when those activities are conducted via social media," she added.

While financial institutions may use social media to market products, Khalil said they must ensure that advertising, account origination and document retention are compliant with applicable consumer protection laws and regulations, including the Truth-in-Lending Act (TILA) and Real Estate Settlement Procedures Act (RESPA).

Social media communications in which lenders advertise loan products must comply with advertising provisions of TILA's Regulation Z, which requires disclosures about loan terms and costs, the final guidance said. Section 8 of RESPA prohibits fee splitting, as well as giving or accepting a fee, kickback, or thing of value in exchange for referrals of settlement service business. RESPA also has specific timing requirements for certain disclosures. These requirements apply to applications taken electronically, including social media.

An example of a RESPA violation would be a referral-based "contest" or "raffle" hosted online or on a social network where a loan officer's clients send him/her referrals in exchange for an opportunity to win things of value or kickbacks.

> "Existing consumer protection and compliance laws and regulations that would apply to a given activity continue to apply when those activities are conducted via social media."

The guidance addresses privacy issues regarding social media as well. To protect non-public personal information (NPI), financial institutions should consider the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act privacy rules and data security guidelines. The rules have relevance when a financial institution integrates social media components into customers' online account experience or takes applications via social media portals.

ALTA Resources

In ALTA's Title Insurance Education e-Kit, members can access sample content to use on Facebook and Twitter. There's also a social media dictionary to help you get up to speed with unfamiliar terms for various platforms, including Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, YouTube, Pinterest, Instagram, Flickr, Foursquare, Yelp, Vine and Snapchat.

www.alta.org/ekit

Employee use of social media sites also is addressed in the guidance. Financial institutions should be aware that employees' social media communications may be viewed by the public as the entity's official policies and may reflect poorly on the business. Employee communications also can subject a financial institution to compliance, operational and reputation risk.

"As appropriate, financial institutions should take steps to address these risks, such as establishing policies and training to address employee participation in social media representing the financial institution," the guidance said.

As an example, if an employee is communicating with a customer through a social media channel about a loan product, policies should include steps to ensure the customer receives all required disclosures. The guidance does not address policies or procedures regarding employee personal use of social media.

ALTA's 2015 Social Media Summit

Here's a glance at the lineup of presentations on tap at this year's Social Media Summit, which will be held from 9:00 a.m. to 4:15 p.m., March 18 at the Sheraton Philadelphia Downtown.

Are You Reaching Your Audience Online?

Google's Aaron Lichtig will lead a discussion on the many opportunities for search and video advertising in the land title insurance industry for budgets of any size. We'll look at the digital landscape and how to use digital tools to reach your customers.

Social Media 101: Connecting with the Consumer

Chris Black of Winged Foot Title and Nicole Kroese of Likeable Local will focus on the many ways the land title insurance industry can target consumers on a variety of social media platforms. In an age of extremely informed consumers, ensuring potential customers have the facts about title insurance and your company is more important than ever before.

Social Media 201: Successful Strategies to Manage Your Online Reputation

With limited time and the growing web of technology and social media, it's critical to be effective in how you manage and control your social presence. Andrew Acker of D. Bello Associates and Bill Risser of Chicago Title will help you review the current state of your social media strategy—whether nonexistent or well developed. Additionally, they will provide tangible ways to easily manage your digital presence and control your online reputation.

Facebook and Twitter Fundamentals

Online marketing strategist Emily Goodstein will focus on Facebook and Twitter fundamentals that go beyond videos of cats and ramblings of your friend's political leanings. This session will help you learn more about hidden Facebook and Twitter tools and ways to use all of the available analytic data.

Brand Storytelling: Who's Telling Yours?

There is a conversation taking place that includes your brand, your industry and your work. Are you a part of it? Margaret Case Little of the National Retail Federation will share how her association has built a content strategy around telling retail's story and breaking down misperceptions about the industry.

Cutting the Clutter in Your Online Message

After a day focused on consumer interaction, reputation management and selling yourself online, Jean Card of Jean Card Ink will lead a conversation about getting to the point and cutting the clutter from your online messages.

Because social media is one of several platforms vulnerable to account takeover and malware attacks, financial institutions should ensure controls are implemented to protect its systems and safeguard customer information. The guidance said a company's incident response protocol regarding a security breach or account takeover should include social media.

Lanette Meister, senior supervisory consumer financial services analyst for the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, said companies should understand and manage their particular activities and risks, and achieve compliance with all relevant laws and regulations. This can be achieved by involving all divisions and personnel, providing appropriate training and addressing the relevant laws, regulations, policies and risks. She said that the risk-management approach should be tailored to each company and that there's no one-size-fits-all template for what policies and procedures should look like.

As far as reputation risk, even if no specific law or regulation has been violated, a company must consider the effect an activity may have on its reputation. Khalil said examples of situations where reputation risk may arise include comments by social media users, spoofing or phishing schemes, privacy issues, and consumer complaints or inquiries.

"The guidance does not require financial institutions to monitor and respond to all Internet communications other than communications on sites maintained on behalf of the institution," she added.

McGovern reminds title professionals that the "Internet is forever." While a post, comment or tweet can be removed, the

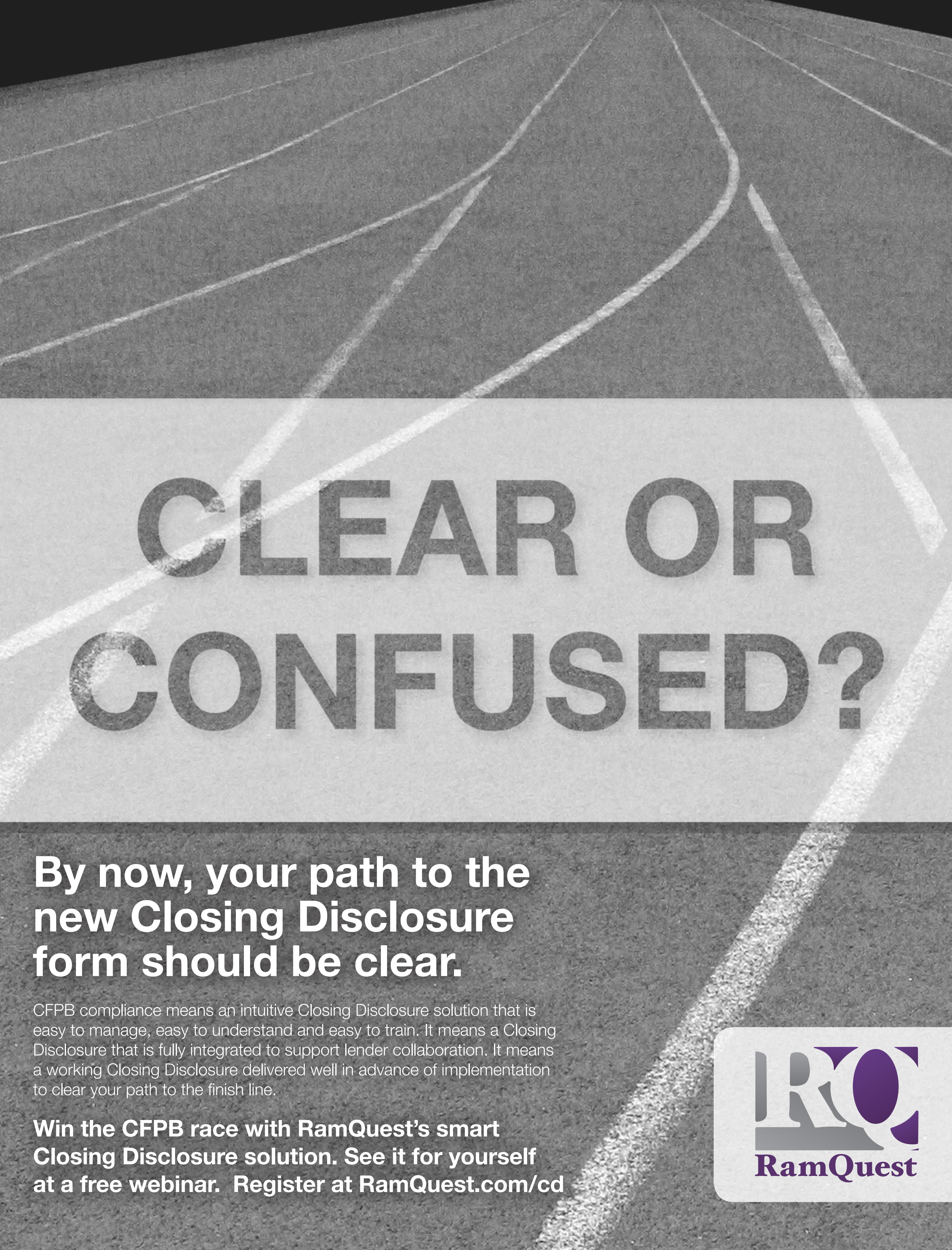
Social Media Risk Management

FFIEC's Recommended Controls	Risks Associated with Not Establishing Controls
Governance structure by which senior-level management directs how social media usage can contribute to strategic goals and initiatives and establishes controls and ongoing assessments of risk related to social media activities.	• *Lack of top-down awareness and knowledge of social media use* • *Misalignment with corporate strategies* • *Lack of accountability for risk oversight*
Developed policies and procedures regarding the usage and monitoring of social media and compliance with applicable customer protection laws and regulations.	• *Legal risks including, but not limited to, costly lawsuits, regulatory penalties, and other ramifications of non-compliance with applicable laws and regulations such as Fair Lending Laws, RESPA, and Section 5 of the Federal Trade Commission's Act, which prohibits unfair, deceptive, or abusive acts and practices*
Due diligence processes for third-party relationships in connection with social media.	• *Misrepresentation of company through third-party's practices* • *Operational risks including, but not limited to, account hijackings or theft of consumer information stemming from a third party's potentially weak operational and information technology infrastructure*
Documented employee-training program incorporating policies and procedures for use of social media.	• *Introduction of legal, compliance, and operational risks stemming from employee misuse of social platforms* • *Lack of organizational insulator in the case of a "rogue" employee's unethical actions* • *Independent employee use of social media platforms reflecting on company's official policies and beliefs*
Oversight process for monitoring information posted by financial institution or contracted third parties.	• *Reputational risk associated with fraud and misrepresentation of brand* • *Inappropriate, untimely management of consumer complaints and inquiries* • *Compliance and legal risks including, but not limited to, non-compliance with Truth in Lending Act and Section 5 of the Federal Trade Commission's Act*
Audit and compliance functions to ensure ongoing compliance with internal policies as well as applicable laws and regulations.	• *Legal and compliance risks including, but not limited to, non-compliance with fair lending laws, TILA and RESPA* • *Stale controls rendered inadequate by the constantly evolving regulatory environment*
Parameters for providing reporting enabling evaluation of social media program's effectiveness and whether it is achieving its stated objectives.	• *Failure to set parameters for the evaluation of a company's social media program makes it difficult to gauge its effectiveness and calls into question its purpose* • *If there is no accountability for sustaining the platforms and adding new content on a regular basis, the company is exposed to reputational risk as sites languish* • *If social media is not integrated into the organization's overall goals and objectives, resources invested in its planning, implementation, and oversight have gone to waste*

information is stored somewhere. Companies must be cognizant of the type of information that is shared via social media.

"Another thing to think about is even if you do not have an online profile for work, people will Google you and they will find your Facebook profile, and your LinkedIn and Twitter accounts," she added. "Make sure you are careful about your privacy settings and what you post. Companies are starting to create much more stringent online policies and making sure there is a disclaimer that the person is not representing the company on their profile. These are great ideas. However, it is still very important for each member of the company to exercise great caution in what they post online." ■

Jeremy Yohe is the vice president of communications at the American Land Title Association. He can be reached by phone at 202-261-2938 or at *jyohe@alta.org*.


CLEAR OR CONFUSED?
By now, your path to the new Closing Disclosure form should be clear.
CFPB compliance means an intuitive Closing Disclosure solution that is easy to manage, easy to understand and easy to train. It means a Closing Disclosure that is fully integrated to support lender collaboration. It means a working Closing Disclosure delivered well in advance of implementation to clear your path to the finish line.
Win the CFPB race with RamQuest's smart Closing Disclosure solution. See it for yourself at a free webinar. Register at RamQuest.com/cd
RQ
RamQuest

ALTA 2015
Elite Provider Guide

In this special advertorial section, ALTA highlights its 2015 Elite Providers—companies providing effective solutions to help you implement Best Practices and achieve certification.

Pillar I	*Licensing*
Pillar II	*Escrow Trust Accounting*
Pillar III	*Protecting NPI*
Pillar IV	*Settlement Processes*
Pillar V	*Policy Production*
Pillar VI	*Insurance Coverage*
Pillar VII	*Consumer Complaints*

www.alta.org/bestpractices

op2
Pillars II, III, IV, V

Company Profile

Key Personnel
Paul Bandiera
President

Steve Terry
Chief Financial Officer

Neil Syken
EVP, Chief Operating Officer

Mary Schuster
EVP, Chief Product Officer

Brooks Yeager
EVP, Chief Strategy Officer

Mike Murphy
VP, Technical Services

Staffing: 84

Contact Information:
5801 Tennyson Parkway
Suite 500
Plano, TX 75024
Phone: 888-746-0023
Website: www.op2online.com
Email: op2contact@op2online.com

Company History
In 2007, Old Republic National Title Insurance Co. introduced the op2 solution to the title and settlement industry. Anticipating significant changes in regulatory and compliance demands, Old Republic understood that the resulting infrastructure and IT requirements could be both financially and practically unattainable for many independent title agents. This led to the company's development of the op2 solution—an underwriter grade, private cloud, hosting environment for the RamQuest title and settlement production solutions. op2 enables the independent agent access to a fully compliant, premium system for an affordable, monthly fee.

Business Services and Products
op2 is an underwriter grade, private cloud, hosting environment for the RamQuest title and settlement production solutions.

Key Features
op2 offers fully integrated land title closing, escrow accounting, imaging, transaction management and digital marketplace tools in a hosted environment that confirms to all of the ALTA Best Practice standards for an IT environment.

Competitive Edge
Title is op2's only business. And, like its customers, op2 is a specialist in its business in order to be specialists in its customers' business. The op2 environment was built by title professionals, to allow agents to achieve underwriter grade security and protection at an economical cost.

Added Value to Clients
op2 offers a highly sophisticated IT environment and infrastructure without requiring a title and settlement operation to have experienced IT personnel and expensive equipment.

Keys to Success
- *Specialists in title hosting, not generalists*
- *op2 speaks title, not IT*
- *Backed by one of the top underwriters in the industry*

Strategies & Goals for the Future
Protecting the rights of small to medium sized agents by offering tools that are critical for them to remain competitive in an era of increasing consolidation and higher costs of doing business.

Client Quote
"I have relied on RamQuest since 2006 but given the increasing scrutiny and demands surrounding NPI, system security and Best Practices processes, the prospect of continuing to invest dollars in an attempt to keep up with those demands was daunting. I knew that I wanted to be in the title business, not the technology business, and had to find a secure and cost effective solution. Now, with op2, I continue to enjoy the benefits of the RamQuest software coupled with the additional IT security and oversight provided by op2. I know that I have the strongest possible foundation for my business, with an easy to budget monthly expense."

- Daniel D. Mennenoh,
President, H. B. Wilkinson Title Co.

ALTA Member Discount
- *Complimentary first month per user/subscription fee for new customers*
- *Complimentary two-year RamQuest User Group (RQUG) membership for one individual at new customer companies*

PCN Network/Safe Escrow

Pillar II

Company Profile

Key Personnel

Pritam Advani
CEO

Ken Smolar
President

Tom Frunzi
SVP, Business Development

Terri O'Connor CPA
VP, Funding Operations

Staffing: 80

Contact Information:

200 Fleet St., Suite 6000
Pittsburgh, PA 15220
Phone: 412-444-1560
Web: www.pcnsafeescrow.com
Email: sales@pcnsafeescrow.com

Company History

PCN just celebrated its 10th year of providing superior closing and disbursement services to its clients. PCN is a prominent provider of attorney closings and escrow funding for mortgage loans in America. PCN serves over 500 clients nationally, including title underwriters, national and regional lenders, title agents and vendor management companies.

Business Services and Products

With our extensive industry experience and a management team, which includes certified public accountants and attorneys, PCN Network/Safe Escrow knows the title and settlement industry. The company's Managed Disbursement model was formed with the goal of providing a safe and secure platform for the disbursement of escrow funds, for use by title agents, with centralized control and oversight by PCN and title insurance underwriters. Recently, the company added attorney document and deed preparation services to its resume.

Key Features

The Safe Escrow Solution is a process-driven web based technology, which incorporates stringent accounting controls with customized banking tools, to provide title agents, title underwriters and lenders a safe and secure method to disburse mortgage proceeds. The well-insured solution complements title agents' existing workflows, and allows a transparent view of the funding procedure on each file.

Competitive Edge

The Safe Escrow platform provides an experienced accounting management team; features include separation of duties, combined with sophisticated technology solutions, and real-time check management at the closing table. The platform provides a centralized managed disbursement process, with local execution and check distribution. Safe Escrow's patent-pending technology enforces control structure and assures that clients meet the strictest standards and best practices.

Added Value to Clients

Safe Escrow also reduces the total costs associated with escrow management. The solution provides escheat management, non-negotiated check resolution, and eliminates banking and wire fees, along with the need for outside reconciliation services. Safe Escrow collaborates with title agents as an integrated solution to manage loan funding and disbursement, providing the flexibility required by title agents. The system's workflow is designed to complement agents' current practices, allowing agents to access, modify and control the release of funds from anywhere, even at the closing table.

Keys to Success

Safe Escrow's managed disbursement solution reduces risk to title agents, title underwriters, and lenders. Operating in a SSAE 16 SOC 2 compliant data center, the platform combines state-of-the-art banking tools with sophisticated internal control practices, while maintaining complete transparency to all parties. Combined with local execution and check management at the closing table, Safe Escrow enables smaller and mid-sized agents to meet changing lender standards and remain viable in the mortgage marketplace.

Strategies & Goals for the Future

To be the preeminent service provider for small to midsized title agents, as an outsource solution for managed disbursements.

Client Quote

"Safe Escrow has changed the risk profile of the title agent by removing the escrow account management risk. For an underwriter, this means that the regional and small single office agent can remain viable to work with major lenders across the United States."

Michael Holden
Vice President and Agency Manager,
North American Title Insurance Company.

ALTA Member Discount

- *Provide the third outbound wire free of charge.*

Pershing Yoakley & Associates PC

Pillars I, II, III, IV, V, VI, VII

Company Profile

Key Personnel

Matthew Rekers, CPA, CIA
Director of ALTA Best Practices Services Group

Michael Shamblin, CPA
Managing Principal of Audit and Assurance Services

Staffing: 180

Contact Information:

2220 Sutherland Ave.
Knoxville, TN 37919
Phone: 800-270-9629
Website: www.pyapc.com/bestpractices
Email: mrekers@pyapc.com

Company History

PYA provides world-class support and delivers comprehensive compliance, assurance and business advisory services. PYA provides timely insight and strategic support, helping clients thrive in the midst of rapid change. PYA is dedicated to providing clients with exceptional professional services reflecting more than 30 years of experience as trusted advisors.

Title industry services and products:

- *Development of policies and procedures consistent with ALTA's Best Practices*
- *Assist with the implementation of ALTA's Best Practices Framework into operational processes, written policies and procedures*
- *Pre-Assessment*
- *Certification*

Key Features

PYA is a Certified Public Accounting (CPA) and consulting firm that assists title and settlement companies with the implementation of ALTA's Best Practices Framework and certification.

Competitive Edge

CPAs are a recognized and trusted source for audit and assurance services involving both financial and non-financial information. It makes sense to require this level of licensing for assistance with such a critical compliance mandate within the title industry. PYA has been in business as a CPA firm for over three decades and is not only recognized for providing audit and assurance services, but for also having title industry and financial institution experience.

Keys to Success

PYA has a clear understanding of the title industry, financial institutions' need for third party risk management, CFPB compliance requirements and responsiveness to clients.

Strategies & Goals for the Future

Continue to be a premier Elite Provider of ALTA Best Practices certifications to the title insurance industry.

Added Value to Clients

Three decades of experience providing Vision Beyond the Numbers.

Client Quote

"There are a number of title and settlement services companies out there claiming to be 'certified' in ALTA's Best Practices, but a number of those certifications are either self-proclaimed or provided by third parties that lack the credentials of an established accounting firm. We chose PYA because they are one of the first qualified firms to offer a rigorous certification process and because of their experience working with settlement services companies, ALTA's Best Practices and CFPB regulations. Our mortgage lending clients have already provided an extremely favorable response to our work with PYA and the overall certification process."

Angela Murin
President,
Commonwealth USA Settlements LLC.

ALTA Member Discount

- *PYA will provide a complimentary evaluation of your Company's ALTA Best Practices policies and procedures (a $300 value!).*

RamQuest Inc.

Pillars II, III, IV, V

Company Profile

Key Personnel

Paul Bandiera
President

Steve Terry
Chief Financial Officer

Neil Syken
EVP, Chief Operating Officer

Mary Schuster
EVP, Chief Product Officer

Brooks Yeager
EVP, Chief Strategy Officer

Staffing: 84

Contact Information:

5801 Tennyson Parkway
Suite 500
Plano, TX 75024
Phone: 800-542-5503
Website: www.ramquest.com
Email: emcanally@ramquest.com

Company History

RamQuest is a Texas-based company serving as a cornerstone in the title industry since 1991.

Business Services and Products

RamQuest offers the most comprehensive title production solutions available in the industry today. The company's solutions are highly configurable, scalable and designed meet the needs of companies of all sizes nationwide.

Key Features

RamQuest's solutions include fully integrated land title closing, escrow accounting, imaging, transaction management and digital marketplace tools that enable title companies to be modernized and profitable; ensuring viability in an ever changing regulatory marketplace.

Competitive Edge

If it's important to you, it's important to RamQuest. From industry advocacy, to having a voice in the development of your title and settlement solution, to exceptional support for day-to-day business needs, RamQuest engages with its customers in every aspect of business. The company understands that, every day, its customers issue long-standing commitments and stand behind them for years to come. RamQuest honors that by standing behind and delivering upon its commitments to customers for years to come.

Keys to Success

- *Reliability*
- *Adaptability*
- *Understanding of evolving industry needs*
- *Proven track record of designing for the future*

Strategies & Goals for the Future

RamQuest is focused on protecting the role of the title and settlement agent as an integral and fundamental part of the homeownership process by listening to the needs of its user community. The company anticipates and adapts to the changing needs of the marketplace, creating unique and superlative tools to help its customers realize business goals. RamQuest strives to provide technology solutions that support and enhance the daily realities of its customers' business.

Added Value to Clients

RamQuest takes a thoughtful and comprehensive approach to its customers' business needs, moving beyond simply providing quality software. By engaging with key thought leaders, industry shapers and stakeholders, regulators and trendsetters, the company is able to design solutions that give RamQuest customers the tools needed to be successful today, tomorrow and for years to come.

Client Quote

"Selecting RamQuest in 2005 meant that I didn't have to make a choice between dependable and sophisticated. They effortlessly take care of all of the expected fundamentals of title and escrow production while simultaneously anticipating and delivering new solutions for emerging needs. My employees love how easy RamQuest's software is to learn and use. Managing my business is made easier by their solutions."

Brian Pittman
President/COO, Independence Title

ALTA Member Discount

- *25 percent off of implementation fees*
- *Two-year complimentary RamQuest User Group membership for one individual at new customer companies*

Real Estate Data Shield Inc.

Pillar III

Company Profile

Key Personnel

Christopher J. Gulotta
Founder and CEO

Paul Schwartz
Chief Privacy Advisor

Richard V. Purcell
Chief Data Security and e-Learning Advisor

Victoria Hatin
Director of Marketing and Sales

Staffing : 4

Contact Information:

271 Madison Ave.
Suite 700
New York, NY 10016
Phone: 212-951-7302
Website: www.realestatedatashield.com
Email: vhatin@redatashield.com

Company History

Real Estate Data Shield was founded in 2012. The company has won two prestigious e-learning awards for its information security courseware and has been named a preferred solution provider for information security compliance (Best Practice Pillar No 3) by seven national title underwriters.

Business Services and Products

1. **Industry Training:** *Providing title and settlement industry education at the leading industry conferences, title underwriter seminars and through published articles and webinars*
2. **Consulting:** *Consulting title and settlement companies on: (i) how to become information security compliant; and (ii) how to meet the increasing lender compliance standards pursuant to CFPB, OCC, FDIC, etc., regulations*
3. **Information Security Web-Based Training:** *A double-award winning, first of its type web-based courseware that clients use to train their employees in Information Security compliance (over 6,000 licensed users)*
4. **Policies & Procedures:** *Information security policy and procedure templates*
5. **Self-Assessment Tool:** *A web-based information security self-assessment tool*

Key Features

Compliance Management System is user friendly, can be accessed by clients 24/7/365 from their desktop or laptop computers.

Competitive Edge

Real Estate Data Shield was the first and remains the only company offering e-learning courseware/staff-training for Information security for the title and settlement industry. The company's executive team includes internationally recognized privacy , data security and title industry experts.

Keys to Success

Real Estate Shield is successful because of company's knowledgeable executive team, which has a passion for being a leader in helping clients meet regulatory requirements. Another key is that the company has partnered with seven national title underwriters, ALTA and state land title associations to provide solutions to its agents.

Strategies & Goals for the Future

Real Estate Data Shield will develop new e-learning tools for the real estate industry, as well as offer consulting for companies striving to meet compliance mandates.

Added Value to Clients

Real Estate Data Shield's cost-effective and easy to implement industry specific solutions allow agents to begin the compliance process and demonstrate to both regulators and lenders that they are striving to meet the compliance mandate. A partnership with Security Compliance Associates allows Real Estate Data Shield to offer information security on-site assessments leading to Best Practice Pillar 3 certifications.

Client Quote

"Too often we take some things for granted. But protecting NPI should never be taken lightly. To further raise the importance of protecting NPI amongst our staff, we engaged on-line training from Real Estate Data Shield. All of Majesty Title Services' staff completed the course. Real Estate Data Shield delivers an excellent product. It's user friendly, relevant and affordable. When you think of the cost of a breach, the ROI is immeasurable. I am more comfortable that our staff understands the importance of this issue better, especially given the headwinds of Best Practices. Real Estate Data Shield has done a great job with this training and we look forward to utilizing their other offerings."

Vincent Cassidy
CEO, Majesty Title Services

ALTA Member Discount

- *10 percent off standard pricing*

Rynoh*Live*
Pillar II

Company Profile

Key Personnel

Dick Reass
Founder and CEO

Glen A. Stout
VP, Marketing and Sales

Staffing: 13

Contact Information:

397 Little Neck Road
3300S-306
Virginia Beach, Va. 23452
Phone: 877-467-9664
Web: www.rynoh.com
Email: glen.stout@rynoh.com

Company History

Introduced nationally in 2009, Rynoh*Live* was soon adopted by settlement agents, real estate attorneys, and underwriters as the industry leader in escrow security, fraud prevention and financial management. Rynoh*Live* received its patent from the U. S. Patent Office in April 2012, securing Rynoh*Live* as the "Industry Standard" for absolute escrow protection. Rynoh*Live*, designed by a settlement agent for settlement agents, ensures the integrity of financial transactions. RynohLive has identified and prevented escrow theft, wire and ACH fraud, stopped employee theft, eliminated check fraud and disbursing errors and has saved our clients millions of dollars in escrow losses and claims. National and regional title insurance underwriters, representing more than 90 percent of the market, have tested, evaluated, endorsed and mandated the use of Rynoh*Live* to mitigate losses caused by agent escrow theft or the mishandling of settlement funds. For lenders, Rynoh*Live* validates the integrity of the transaction from origination to closing settlements.

Business Services and Products

RynohLive offers escrow and financial management software.

Key Features

- **Rynoh*Pay*:** *A fully automated near real-time Positive Pay interface with banks ensures that only validated checks are honored. Rynoh offers a standalone solution if the bank does not offer a Positive Pay service.*
- **Rynoh*Trax*:** *RynohTrax enables the monitoring of specific types of transactions in your account by setting Alerts that notify clients when they do not clear the Bank within a specified time. Transactions that meet the Alert criteria you specify will be reflected on the "Morning Report" and can also be viewed on-demand through the RynohTrax module.*
- **Rynoh*Recon*:** *An automatic daily three-way reconciliation with an embedded "Wizard" that identifies accounting and posting errors. In addition, this feature sends alerts of potential issues mitigates or eliminates loss from fraud or error. A "Reconciliation Analysis" feature identifies the status of transactions that may represent audit or regulatory issues.*
- **Rynoh*Report*:** *A comprehensive set of daily and monthly reports that enable proactive management and oversight of escrow activities. The "Morning Report" is a daily analysis report of escrow account activity and integrity. It is emailed to designated recipients and contains user-defined alerts of critical transactions, reconciliation status and available funds by file/subaccount.*
- **Rynoh*Secure*:** *Allows the agent and underwriter to monitor and fully audit account activity on a near real-time basis. RynohSecure also allows for the monitoring and analysis of multiple offices and bank accounts. Anti-fraud algorithms, funds verification protocols and other techniques generate alerts whenever a potentially fraudulent event is detected.*

Competitive Edge

Rynoh*Live* is the only solution that provides "electronic verification" of a company's reconciliation, as well as proactive oversight of escrow accounts, the power to review deposits, critical disbursements, wire activity, correct errors and stop would-be thieves.

Added Value to Clients

RynohLive offers a proven solution that is easy to use, at an affordable cost. We help our clients meet new industry required compliance parameters, deliver prompt and reliable client support, and offer ongoing training.

Client Quote

"One thing I really like in my office in the morning is a hot cup of coffee, the Wall Street Journal and a Rynoh Early Morning Report. In the morning you get a report from Rynoh that tells you if everything you expected to happen the previous day has happened!"

Craig Haskins,
Chief Operating Officer, Knight Barry Title

ALTA Member Discount

- *60-day no obligation free trial. This offer may not be combined with any other promotion*

Once You *Feel* *IT* *Coming...*

IT'S Almost Too Late!

Many settlement agents today can relate to this guy – feeling the compliance train barreling down the tracks. But it's not too late to secure your escrow accounts with the industry's leading solution **Rynoh*Live*.**

ALTA's Best Practices Pillar #2 states:

*Adopt and maintain appropriate written procedures and controls for escrow trust accounts, allowing for **electronic verification of reconciliation.***

This is precisely what we do at Rynoh*Live* - we provide electronic verification of reconciliation. Specifically, our solution provides transparency to the data that comprises the reconciliation.

Rynoh*Live* is a patented solution that allows you to follow ALTA's Best Practices pillar #2 and manage your escrow trust accounts ***DAILY***. We are endorsed by nearly all of the national and regional underwriters, and have saved eight agents from going out of business by preventing fraud, bank errors, embezzlement, cyber fraud and employee errors. Our software solution is easy to use and ***surprisingly inexpensive!***

- Rynoh*Live* alerts you when critical transactions such as unsent wires and stale dated checks need your attention.
- We offer an automated Positive Pay delivery system and a stand-alone solution to protect you from check fraud.
- And we include a host of tools and reports that allow you to reconcile your accounts each and every day.

Sound too good to be true?

Give us **30 minutes** and we will show you exactly how our patented solution works. We will give you a no-obligation quote based upon the size of your agency or firm, and provide you insights on how we make our clients businesses secure!

Call today to schedule a demo and learn more about the ultamate solution to ALTA's Best Practice Pillar #2.

Rynoh*Live*

397 Little Neck Road | 3300S-306 | Virginia Beach | VA 23452

Call **877-467-9664** (or) Visit **www.rynoh.com**

Rynoh*Live*®
Absolute Financial Protection

Survey: 10 Percent of Community Banks Consider Exiting Residential Business

CFPB Proposes Changes to Mortgage Rules in Effort to Aid Smaller Financial Institutions

Increased regulatory requirements are making it harder for community banks to issue residential mortgage loans and driving more of these lenders to consider exiting this line of business, according to a survey released in January by the Independent Community Bankers of America.

The survey found that nearly 75 percent of community banks that participated in the survey said new mortgage regulations are keeping them from making more residential mortgage loans in their communities.

Additionally, while most banks reported that they remain active residential mortgage lenders, a significant percentage are considering an exit. The survey showed that 9 percent are considering dropping this line of business, another 6 percent are in the process of exiting from this line of lending and another 9 percent are not active.

The survey also found that:

- 78 percent of respondents reported increasing the number of staff members dedicated to lending compliance over the past five years
- 44 percent said they originated fewer first-lien residential mortgage loans in 2014 compared with the year before

One of the main challenges is that mortgage lending continues to suffer from excessive regulation, which is changing the cost structure of the business.

James Chessen, chief economist for the American Bankers Association, said, "It's painfully clear that new regulatory requirements have restrained mortgage lending and have made it particularly difficult for first-time homebuyers. The complex and liability-laden maze of compliance has made originations very hard to make, especially to borrowers with little or weak credit history."

According to the Mortgage Bankers Association, independent mortgage banks and mortgage subsidiaries of chartered banks posted a net gain of $954 on each loan they originated in the second quarter of 2014. This was up from a reported loss of $194 per loan in the first quarter of 2014.

"The gains seen in the second quarter come after first-quarter losses that were likely triggered by a variety of factors including the implementation of new Dodd-Frank regulations and extremely low origination volumes," said Marina Walsh, MBA's vice president of industry analysis. "Some loan closings may have been pushed into the second quarter, resulting in an increase in profitability as per-loan production costs declined."

Despite many challenges, community banks maintain a positive outlook toward most areas of lending over the next two years. The most positive outlook was for commercial lending (70 percent) and commercial real estate lending (62 percent). Fewer community banks—though still a majority of those responding — have a positive outlook on residential real estate (56 percent) and agricultural (52 percent).

The survey also found that 66 percent of respondents said they do not provide loans that are outside the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau's (CFPB) Qualified Mortgage (QM) definition or would only do so in special cases. Just 25 percent of community bankers said they are providing loans that do not fit the CFPB's QM definition, showing

What's Going On In Your Market?

We are hearing that many title companies are either merging or being sold to competitors due to regulatory compliance concerns. We'd like to hear what's going on in your market. You can share comments by emailing *communications@alta.org*.

that the new restrictions have shrunk the credit box and taken away lender discretion in granting credit. Meanwhile, half of all rural banks said they do not qualify for the QM rule's "rural" exception, which suggests that exemptions from the standard are too narrow, limiting access to credit for consumers who need it.

In an effort to help smaller financial institutions make more loans, the CFPB has proposed changes to its ability-to-repay rules. The bureau said the proposal would boost the number of financial institutions able to offer certain types of mortgages in rural and underserved areas while giving them extra time to comply with the QM rules. The CFPB is accepting public comment on the proposed rule until March 30 (*federalregister.gov/a/2015-02125*).

Since the QM rules went into effect over a year ago, community banks and credit unions have argued they did not contribute to the 2008 financial crisis and should be exempt from regulations in the Dodd-Frank financial reform law aimed at clamping down on shoddy mortgage practices.

Under the proposal, the loan origination limit would be raised to $2,000 from $500 and would exclude loans held in portfolios by the creditor and its mortgage affiliates.

In addition, the proposal expands the definition of what areas are considered rural, which allows for greater flexibility for lenders in those areas.

The proposal maintains the current $2 billion asset limit for small-creditor status but would include the assets of the creditor's mortgage-originating affiliates in calculating whether a creditor is under the limit.

The ability-to-repay rule requires lenders to ensure that a borrower's total debt payment doesn't exceed 43 percent of pre-tax wages. The CFPB said the proposal would increase the number of small lenders, which includes banks and credit unions, to 10,400 from around 9,700.

In addition to concerns about the ability to issue QM loans, the top compliance concern for U.S. banks and credit unions in 2015 is complying with the CFPB's integrated mortgage disclosures, according to Wolters Kluwer Financial Services. The new RESPA-TILA rules present unprecedented changes that will impact lenders' entire mortgage operations, including business processes, technology, policies and procedures, vendor relationships, employee readiness and customer service. Failure to comply could result in significant fines and penalties, costing thousands of dollars each day, as well as regulatory and reputational risks.

In October, Wolters Kluwer surveyed nearly 400 U.S. banks and credit unions regarding their ability to manage compliance obligations and risk. From a compliance standpoint, 72 percent cited ongoing challenges in complying with changing regulations. Three quarters of those surveyed noted that the integrated disclosure would be a significant challenge.

Additionally, concern over the ability to manage risk has grown, with 44 percent of respondents citing regulatory pressures as a main obstacle in managing risk at the organizational level. Sixty-three percent cited regulatory risk as their top risk concern, followed by IT risk (45 percent), fair lending risk (38 percent) and fraud (36 percent). Less than one in five respondents characterized their organizations as having a comprehensive, strategic enterprise risk management program in place. Another one in five indicated that they understand and manage risks but have no formal process or program in place.

As banks and credit unions face increased regulatory and risk-management challenges, the ability to meet them with existing resources has also been tested. One in three respondents indicated they have hired or transferred staff from revenue-generating roles to help manage growing risk and compliance requirements in the past 12 months.

"Clearly, banks and credit unions are feeling increased pressure on their ability to comply with regulatory requirements and appropriately manage risk," said Tim Burniston, vice president and senior director of Wolters Kluwer financial services' risk and compliance consulting practice. "The survey results provide a compelling argument for continued investment in systems and approaches financial institutions can employ to address these mounting regulatory and risk obligations." ■

Using Technology to Expedite the Homebuying and Refinance Process

Title and Settlement Companies That Help Lenders Meet Regulatory Compliance will Grow Market Share

BY TAREK SHARIF

In early Anglo-Norman law, the securing of property for a loan meant that the creditor held the property until the loan was repaid. The loan was called a mort gaige, from the Law French meaning dead pledge. In essence, the fruit of the land was dead to the borrower, since any money or product of the land was kept by the creditor.

By the mid 1400s, that definition had evolved to look similar to the mortgage as we know it. English lawyers used the term to refer to a loan (pledge) where the property and all the benefits of the land remain in the debtor's possession until the loan is repaid, with predetermined conditions that are agreed upon at settlement. The "death" part of the phrase *mort gaige* referred to the loss of the property should the borrower fail to repay the loan.

Today, a mortgage does not necessarily indicate a death pledge, but it has become an important part of buying or refinancing a home. The Dodd-Frank Act, signed into law in July 2010, created the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB). The CFPB was established with the intent of consolidating the consumer financial protection functions that were previously spread out over different federal agencies. One of the CFPB's goals is to elucidate and simplify the purchasing process for homebuyers. One way the bureau looks to do this is by combining the documents required by the Truth in Lending Act and Real Estate Settlement Procedures Act.

The new regulations that helped create the integrated disclosures—which are called the Loan Estimate and Closing Disclosure—are based upon the CFPB's idea of "Know Before You Owe." The ability for a consumer to understand clearly the breakdown of costs allows them to do a better job price shopping for the best loan. By minimizing the risk of "hidden costs" and making the customer more perceptive price-wise, it falls onto the real estate agent, loan officer and settlement agent to gear their marketing approach toward education and a simpler way to explain complex transaction. Price transparency creates more competition among settlement agents to keep costs down, which is needed to preserve lender relationships and attract new ones.

While larger agents may have the processes and systems in place to keep costs down and margins consistent, the small to midsize agents will find themselves competing on a larger playing field, where they must work harder than ever to maintain their client base while the larger agents can more easily cut prices and manage a small loss for a larger gain down the road.

In addition to increased price competition, ALTA's Best Practices are becoming the benchmark by which lenders will measure the ability of the settlement agent to maintain their business. As lenders focus more on compliance and begin to create and deliver their own Closing Disclosures, it becomes more important than ever for agents to adjust their processes and procedures to maintain systems that are compliant with the new regulation and offers the lender the peace of mind that their business is in good hands. The first companies to do this will be the ones that dominate the market for years to come.

Fortunately, technology provides many of the tools that can level the disparity between small and large agents. The new laws create a new home purchasing environment, one where lenders, agents and real estate agents compete on price, speed, compliance and quality. In most cases, either your underwriter or your settlement software provider can help in many of these areas. In other situations, there are third-party software providers that can help you build a strong web presence, along with delivering email encryption and document security that are in compliance with the new laws.

Using technology within your business generally falls into two main areas: customer interface and back-office technology.

Customer interface is the technology you use to present your business to the world. In addition to your webiste, this can include automated email marketing campaigns, podcasting or other electronic informational materials.

Your website should be the backbone of all your electronic sales, information and marketing messaging. There are many companies, some helmed by title industry veterans, that create and host websites tailored to settlement agents. A good website has some of these key elements:

Tools

A login page for existing customers that takes lenders and real estate agents to areas where they can use your online tools to submit orders, email or chat with your staff, create pricing quotes and be able to see closing documents on the fly.

Information

Make sure the visitors to your site know what you can do and where you are. Make their price comparison easy by offering quick access to information on basic closing principles and the homebuyer process. The more you educate, the more you become an ongoing resource to whoever stops by.

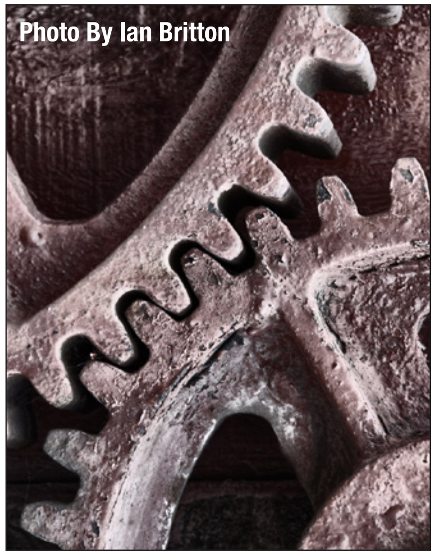
Specialized information

Your website will be as unique as the area you are in. Your company website can link to a more personalized real estate blog, where you can share current information with your site visitors and give your take on local real estate issues. Some companies have even created their own YouTube channels, in which they post videos and updates on current trends in real estate, new and updated laws and overall issues that can come up at closing.

Keep in mind that most web traffic does not necessarily constitute sales. However, as more and more millennials enter the housing market, the Internet is the first stop in their homebuying experience. Make sure you are presenting the right image for your company on your site and carefully maintain it. While you may not see leads at first, those website visitors can become customers when they finally decide to purchase a home.

Back-office technology refers to the technology you use behind the scenes to make your processes faster and more efficient. The best way to begin looking at your options is a full examination of your current processes and the gaps that lie therein.

Start with the customer experience and work backward. What is the ideal



experience that you envision for your customers? Are you and your team currently living up to that standard? If not, what parts of your process need to be refined to craft the customer experience you want? You may be surprised at what you find.

Can It Be Automated?

What pieces of your process can be done somewhere else? Many large settlement companies centralize their operations in one office and use their other offices primarily for sales. The best starting point for figuring out what can be automated is to check with your underwriter and your current software provider. They may have programs and software available that can streamline processes.

Your settlement processing software most likely has add-on features and integrations that can effectively automate your more mundane tasks, with the added benefit of tracking and minimizing user error. Your underwriter also may have many options to help you automate your policy production, as well as tools that help you remain compliant with the new legislation and any upcoming revisions and changes.

Can We Communicate Better?

Internal communication is just as important as external communication. With regard to settlement production, there are companies that can securely ensure that all parties see the latest revisions of their relevant settlement documents through a secure website as opposed to emailing documents back and forth. Often, this functionality may be built right into your settlement software. The Closing Disclosure will require great collaboration between the lender and settlement agents. There will need to be a secure method to share data back and forth in order to meet timing requirements of the new regulations. Technology will help meet this need.

Employee-to-employee communication is also important. While the value of picking up the phone and calling a coworker in another office to get information cannot be underestimated, using internal messaging software can sometimes be faster and more effective if you have a quick question and need a quick answer.

While the strongest point of any business should be the sales and marketing, operational inefficiencies can slowly eat away at your overall profitability. Using the tools at your disposal to cut waste and improve your processes can help your bottom line and allow you to better manage fluctuating volume.

From the 1400s to today, the lending of money in exchange for the securing of real property is deeply rooted in our collective history. The new regulations will ultimately benefit the consumer. In order for settlement agents to increase and maintain their business, they have to reinvent their entire business model, developing one with a more singular focus on the customer and grounded in strong technology and strong process. ■

Tarek Sharif is director of sales for LodeStar Software Solutions, a New York-based company that provides sales management software for the title insurance industry. He can be reached at *tsharif@lssoftwaresolutions.com*.

Home Affordability, Ability-to-Repay Key Drivers in Fraud Trends

Mortgage Fraud Risk Declines in Q3 2014, but Rising Home Prices Drive Spike in Certain Markets and for HELOCs

Overall, mortgage fraud risk decreased during the third quarter of 2014, however the latest report from Interthinx shows that risk from certain types of fraud increased.

Despite the elevated risk in distressed markets, fraud risk declined 2 percent compared to second-quarter 2014 and is down 9 percent year over year.

It should be noted that the report does not measure actual fraud, but rather is an indicator of the potential risk of fraud, based on a variety of market data. Interthinx fraud risk indices are influenced by many factors including house price indices, concentrations of defaulted and foreclosed properties, market demand and supply, employment rates, collusion by parties to loan transactions, regulation and changing consumer patterns.

Buoying the overall drop was a 5 percent decrease in property valuation and employment/income fraud risks, according to Interthinx. At the national level, the impact of the Dodd-Frank Act Ability-to-Repay rule is evident in the lower incidences of employment/income fraud risk. Given that the rule requires lenders to increase their scrutiny and validation of borrower income, there is less opportunity for misrepresentation during loan origination.

The latest findings continue to suggest that decreases in housing affordability are a significant factor in employment/income misrepresentation rates.

"Housing price pressure and home affordability can closely correlate with fraud risk," said Jeff Moyer, president of Interthinx. "Analysis of our indices has shown that higher fraud risk is associated with markets that have lower affordability metrics. When first-time or lower-income homebuyers face challenges during the qualification of credit, it can open the door to potential risk factors. Conversely, in the most affordable markets—where median income exceeds monthly housing expense, deposits are stronger, and consumer debts are lower, there is less likelihood to misrepresent income and our indices show comparatively lower fraud risk."

Results from Interthinx mesh with data from CoreLogic, which also showed a decrease in mortgage application fraud risk across all categories, except for home equity lines of credit (HELOC).

Over the past 18 months, incidents of fraud linked to HELOCs have been on the rise following the growth in home equity lending levels, CoreLogic reported. Increasing home values have yielded higher levels of home equity, enabling many homeowners who had been locked out of the market to purchase a different property, refinance or obtain a home equity loan, according to CoreLogic. An example of HELOC fraud is multi-lien fraud. This occurs when scammers take advantage of the lag between closing and recording a loan to solicit multiple loans on a property.

Mortgage application fraud varies significantly across housing markets. Florida ranked the highest among all states in the third quarter of 2014, according to CoreLogic's Mortgage Application Fraud Index. The other top four states were Nevada, New York, New Jersey and Hawaii.

While the overall trend indicates a drop in fraud, a handful of states continue to be high-risk. California is once again the riskiest state despite a 12-percent drop in overall risk. Rounding out the top five states for fraud risk are New Jersey, Connecticut, Florida and Illinois.

Property Valuation Fraud Risk Index

The Property Valuation Fraud Risk Index is 122, down 5 percent from last quarter and up 20 percent from one year ago. Decreases in the frequencies in alerts associated with property flipping and valuation fraud (overestimating and underestimating) contribute to the recent decrease in this index. The sharp increase in the national Property Valuation Fraud Risk Index in Q1 2014 may have been driven by indicators suggesting that participants in certain areas were purchasing and listing multiple properties in the same neighborhood. By purchasing a dominant portion of a market, an individual or a group could control market prices in that area by altering comparable listing prices to set sales prices artificially to their advantage.

Identity Fraud Risk Index

While the index is down 3 percent from last quarter after a sharp increase earlier in the year, the overall trend this past year shows a decrease in identity fraud risk that is largely due to decreases in the frequencies of alerts where a borrower's name is not present or does not match the SSN trace. The decrease is good news for title and settlement agents. Lenders will often try to hold them liable for not detecting the fraud at the closing table. Lenders also often will attempt to file a CPL claim by alleging the agent failed to follow the closing instructions.

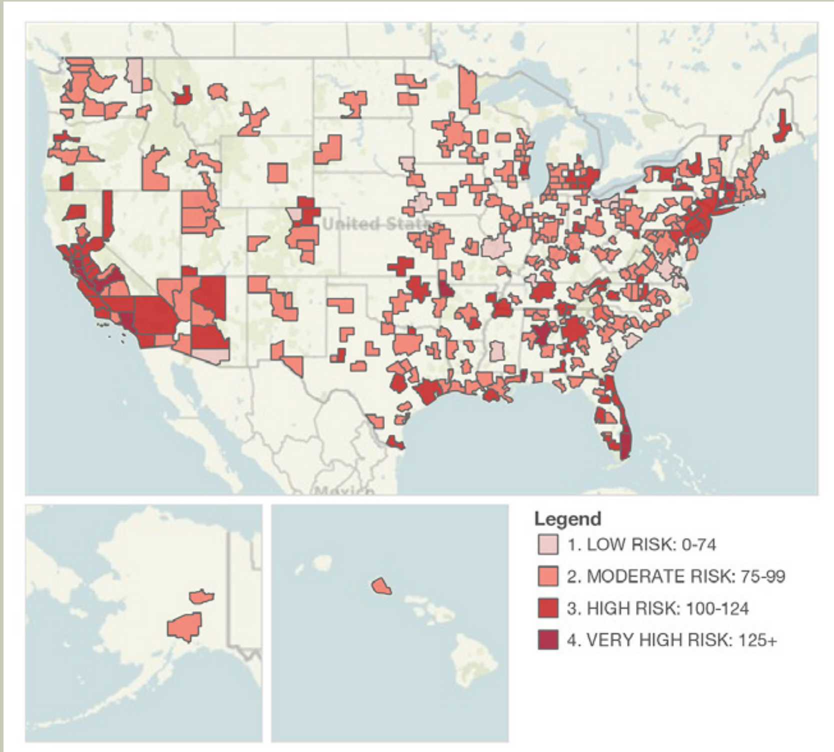
Occupancy Fraud Risk Index

The Occupancy Fraud Risk Index is 133, up 4 percent from last quarter, and down by 10 percent from Q3 2013. This suggests that the slow transition to a purchase-dominated market—which involves more parties, more documents and more variables—is now manifesting in a higher risk than was observed during the refinance-dominated market. The recent small increase in alerts for borrowers having multiple owner occupied loan applications may signal increased risk due to investor activity. Occupancy fraud is primarily committed by investors who falsely claim the intent to occupy a property in order to obtain a mortgage with a lower down payment and/or interest rate.

Employment/Income Fraud Risk Index

Nine of the 10 riskiest MSAs for employment/income fraud risk are located in California, five of which return to the top 10 this quarter: San Jose-Sunnyvale-Santa Clara, San Francisco-Oakland-Fremont, Los Angeles-Long Beach-Santa Ana, Santa Cruz-Watsonville and San Diego-Carlsbad-San Marcos. The riskiest MSA for Employment/Income Fraud Risk is Fresno, Calif. ■

Hot Spots



For the past several years, areas with concentrations of distressed properties and borrowers—California and Florida, for example—have presented a wealth of opportunity for scammers. This map shows that while those states still present high levels of opportunity for fraud and have high index values, risk in the Northeast is also elevated.

Source: Interthinx

A lot will happen between today and August 1, 2015.

Spring will most certainly come - promise. Rates will go up, stay the same, or fall - who knows? Someone will land that big client - we hope it's you! There will be lots of dinners, and even more meetings. There will be vacations to the beach, to the mountains, to the lake, to the river, or overseas.

A lot will happen between today and the first day of August. However, we recommend you take time to ...

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Paint Yourself Pistachio in a Vanilla Landscape

New Jersey Title Expert Expands Horizons After Being Designated a National Title Professional by ALTA

BY JOE GRABAS CTP NTP

I was sitting at my desk in New Jersey when a call came in from California. It was a West Coast-based, expert-witness resource organization looking for a New Jersey title expert. I was somewhat surprised! Here was a company on the other side of the country, looking for a title expert on a matter that was being handled by a large law firm located just a few miles down the road from my office. After 37 years in the title industry I have expanded my professional résumé to include title expert services. I truly enjoy the challenges that the work demands, but the solicitations usually come from within the state, based upon personal references and contacts.

Why this transcontinental contact? Having formerly been recognized by the New Jersey Land Title Association as a Certified Title Professional in 1992, it was the further recognition that came from being designated a National Title Professional by ALTA that brought my skills and experience across the nation to the Golden State.

For many years, other lines of insurance have enjoyed their professional designations: Chartered Property Casualty Underwriter (CPCU), Chartered Life Underwriter (CLU), Certified Risk Manager (CRM) and Certified Insurance Counselor (CIC), to name a few. These designations set individuals apart, as veterans of the insurance industry who maintain a unique set of skills and experience born of a devotion to their profession. This same level of devotion is keenly observed within the title industry, and since March 1, 2013, the American Land Title Association has recognized that through the National Title Professional (NTP) program.

In 1988, the title business in New Jersey became homogenized upon the passing of the Insurance Producer's Licensing Act of 1988 (N.J.S.A. 17:22A-1).

Prior to that time only the officers and owners of title agencies needed to be licensed. After 1988, virtually everyone in the business held the same license, and we became part of the collective unflattering vanilla mass known as insurance producers. What an unwelcome moniker, painting everyone with the same brush.

Further efforts toward uniformity by the NAIC through its support of the National Association of Registered Agents and Brokers (originally provided for under the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act) facilitates multi-state licensure but also contributes to the anonymity of the seasoned title professional. Each dedicated title professional is blended into a cornucopia of insurance producers and reduced to a National Producer Number. How do you stand apart? How does your experience, expertise, commitment and service in and to the title profession become recognized?

ALTA's National Title Professional (NTP) program does just that. The NTP designation recognizes "land

What's the NTP Designation?

The National Title Professional Designation is designed to recognize land title professionals who demonstrate the knowledge, experience, and dedication essential to the safe and efficient transfer of real property. So far, 40 ALTA members have earned their NTP. To apply, go to *www.alta.org/ntp*.

title professionals who demonstrate the knowledge, experience and dedication essential to the safe and efficient transfer of real property. The NTP designation shows evidence of industry proficiency and demonstrates knowledge, experience, and efficiency in, and dedication to, the land title industry. The NTP represents a measure of achievement and commitment to career development."

Since becoming an NTP in 2013, the expert services segment of my business has increased by 200 percent. I have appeared as an expert witness in court and have been called upon to provide consultation and research on complex real estate matters. I have also been able to give lectures throughout the country. Earning the NTP designation has strengthened my credentials as an expert and also as an educator. The NTP designation has also assisted me in developing the Grabas Institute for Continuing Education LLC into the premier continuing education provider in New Jersey, offering dozens of CE training programs annually.

Establishing a set of enhanced professional credentials allowed me to venture into other areas of interest where my particular expertise in land titles comes into play:

- becoming a member of the Association of Professional Genealogists, where I offer my unique knowledge of New Jersey land title research
- being appointed by the Governor to the N.J. Tidelands Resource Council, which oversees the management and disposition of all land now or formerly flowed by tidal waters in the State of New Jersey
- being named to the Monmouth County Historical Commission, responsible for preservation of our local historical sites
- being accepted by the History Press to publish a book on the importance of land ownership and land transfer to the development of New Jersey

These opportunities have come my way due to professional credentials that include the NTP designation.

All of this happened because I took the time to explore the NTP designation and apply my experience and skills to attain that recognition. I now find myself a member of a national expert witness consortium that has expanded my reach well beyond the Garden State. I have been called to consult on various matters by the Department of Defense, New Jersey State Archives, Morristown National Historic Park, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and the office of the New Jersey Attorney General.

Take a moment, visit *www.alta.org/ntp* and discover the doors waiting to be opened and the opportunities waiting to be found. See those peers who have already been awarded this prestigious designation at *www.alta.org/ntp/directory.cfm* and begin working on that application today.

Paint yourself pistachio in an otherwise vanilla landscape! ■

Joe Grabas CTP NTP, is an ALTA member and president and CEO of Investors Title Agency. He can be reached at 732-985-9600 or *jgrabas@njtitleweb.com*.

10 Questions with Linda Foster

Title: Branch Manager
Company: First American Title Insurance Co. of Crook County (Wyoming)

How long have you been in the title industry and how did you get started in this profession?

I've been in the industry for 20 years. I started working for First American Title Insurance Guarantee in November 1995. I was hired to index, keep the books and answer the phones. A year later, the manager retired, and I was offered the job. I am still here after all the changes. This little office has changed its name three times and is now a direct operation. There are just two of us in the office and we service two counties in the northeast corner of Wyoming.

What excites you about what you do or what is the most challenging aspect of your job?

Being in a small office, I am not only a manager, I am also the "title guy" and the escrow officer. I love the history that unfolds with each order and the paths each order can take you down. I enjoy working with all our customers, but find real satisfaction when working with young couples on buying their first home. I get a good feeling when customers leave with smiles on their faces and keys in their hands.

Why is the title industry is a great career opportunity for those entering the workforce?

If you like people and history, there is a place for you in this industry whether it is in title or escrow. This is an industry where you learn and grow each day. Nowhere else can you be trained so diversely. There is always a new challenge.

What advice do you have for professionals starting their career in the industry?

You will love it or you will hate it. If you enjoy it, the job will become addicting. Once a "title guy" always a "title guy." Start at the bottom and work your way up through the trenches learning every aspect of the industry from indexing to commitments and policies and throw a closing or two in for variety. I can't think of any other job that will give you so much on-the-job training.

What's your best industry "war" story?

I am not sure I have a "war" story, though there are customers who will forever be etched in my mind. One example is the man who, after finding out his ex-wife's name was still on the title, wanted to know how I could have let that happen. After he did lots of venting, I contacted the ex-wife and got a deed signed. Or there was the time I sat with a customer's attorney for hours, and my answer to every question was "I'm sorry sir, I didn't work here then."

Why are you a member of ALTA?

The company I work for was already an ALTA member when I started working. After my first state convention, I came away in awe of the networking and close ties everyone had developed and how much each one of them loved what they did. After my first national convention, I realized that ALTA truly is the voice of the industry and how hard ALTA works to protect the future of our industry. When the Wyoming Land Title Association needed a secretary/treasurer, I volunteered and have been doing it ever since.

Tell us something that others in the industry may not know about you?

I think I am a pretty open book. I love being a grandmother, camping, four-wheeling, playing in the snow whether it is on a snowmobile or on a runner sled, gardening and crocheting. I guess I pretty much just enjoy life.

If you could have dinner with anyone, who would it be and why?

Queen Elizabeth and President Eisenhower. Being a history buff, sitting and listening to them visit about life would be so interesting.

What's your favorite book or movie? Why?

I love Disney movies—guess I am still a kid at heart.

What do you do to unwind from a stressful day?

After a long day, there is nothing better than sitting on the porch just watching the sunset with a glass of iced tea. ■

ALTA Member Profiles

ALTA periodically profiles its members in TitleNews. If you know someone who would make a good candidate for a member profile, please send us an email at *communications@alta.org* and tell us why.

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AMERICAN LAND TITLE ASSOCIATION

Technology Solution Helps Speed Up Closings

Collaboration Between Title Company, Credit Union and Software Provider Produces 15-minute Closings

With less than five months to go until the TILA-RESPA Integrated Disclosure rule takes effect Aug. 1, it's no secret that many businesses are trying to figure out how they will adapt to the changes it will bring.

Three businesses—Pavaso, Mountain American Credit Union and Bonneville Superior Title Company— collaborated to implement digital closings and have already seen successful results. Since the first closing on Dec. 31, 2014, over half of the closings have taken less than 30 minutes to complete. Two of them occurred in less than 15 minutes.

"It's incredible," said Amy Moser, vice president of mortgage services at Mountain America Credit Union. "We had to verify the times with the escrow officers because we didn't believe it at first. Digital closings are proving that secure delivery of documents prior to closing is not only convenient to our members, but extremely effective."

Just a few months ago, Mountain America and Pavaso were introduced when they were paired up as participants in the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau's (CFPB) e-Closing pilot—a study that is largely observing the effectiveness of technology on consumer education and their participation in the closing process.

"We were excited last year when we learned that we would be working with an industry pioneer like Mountain America," said Mark McElroy, Pavaso's president and CEO. "It was also exciting to learn that there are so many title companies surrounding them that are willing to embrace digital closing technologies."

Pavaso worked with Mountain America and several title companies to prepare for digital closings by integrating two solutions into its digital closing platform. The two solutions, Digital Close and Signing Table, fill critical gaps that previously kept e-closings from widespread adoption in the marketplace, Pavaso said in a release.

Digital Close allows all stakeholders of a closing (including the consumer), to collaborate, communicate and complete tasks in a workflow-manner by standardizing the closing process. Links to educational material (text, brochures or even videos) can be added to any document for review prior to closing. It also tracks the documents and educational material the consumer viewed and acknowledged. The browser-based delivery works on desktops, laptops, tablets and mobile phones.

Another component to the platform is Pavaso's Signing Table solution, which is a Windows 8 application that is accessed by everyone at the closing table on a touch-enabled tablet. In addition to the "click-to-sign" functionality that is typical of e-closings, it also provides quality control mechanisms to ensure closings are 100 percent complete in order to reduce errors and improve the quality of the mortgage. In fact, the closer can't complete the closing until all documents have been viewed and signed, according to Pavaso.

"It's easy to use, and setting it up was fast," said Kirk Smith, president of Bonneville Superior Title Company. "The Windows 8 application not only speeds up the entire closing process, but provides a really nice presence to the consumer at the closing table. And it's nice to know that the error-prevention built into the solution prevents incomplete closings from happening."

In addition to aligning with the mission of the CFPB and keeping the consumer-friendly spirit of the TILA-RESPA changes, McElroy said Pavaso's platform and solutions prove that the modernization of outdated and inefficient processes in the industry can be implemented successfully. ■

Solutionstar Completes Acquisition of Title365

Solutionstar Holdings LLC, an indirect wholly-owned subsidiary of Nationstar Mortgage Holdings Inc., completed the acquisition of Experience 1 Inc., the holding company for Title365, Trusted Signing and technology subsidiaries X1 Labs and X1 Xpress.

Solutionstar intends to combine its title operations with Title365 and operate under the Title365, X1 Labs, X1 Xpress, X1 Analytics and Trusted Signing brands.

"This acquisition positions Solutionstar as a premier national title player and is an important next step in our ongoing commitment to develop the nation's premier real estate technology company," said Nationstar CEO Jay Bray.

The transaction closed for $36 million with additional consideration dependent on the ongoing involvement of certain employees and certain performance targets.

CSC Acquires PropertyInfo's E-recording Submitter Business

Corporation Service Company (CSC) has acquired the e-recording submitter business of PropertyInfo Corp., a wholly owned subsidiary of Stewart Title Co. By becoming part of the CSC network, current PropertyInfo customers will now have access to more than 600 additional counties for e-recording. CSC provides electronic recording capabilities covering approximately 90 percent of the population where e-recording is currently permitted.

RamQuest Integrates with CSC

RamQuest Inc. announced that its Closing Market digital network is now integrated with the electronic document recording solution from Corporation Service Company (CSC). This integration enables RamQuest's customers to access document filing services through CSC without having to leave their title production platform. With the CSC integration, RamQuest customers can submit land records and property documents directly to county authorities from either of RamQuest's title production solutions.

CFPB Finalizes Minor Changes to Rules for Integrated Mortgage Disclosures

The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) on Jan. 20 finalized two modifications to its rules for integrated mortgage disclosures, which go into effect Aug. 1. The changes address when consumers will receive updated disclosures after locking in an interest rate and how consumers receive information regarding certain construction loans.

Under the modified rule, creditors are required to provide a revised Loan Estimate within three business days after a consumer locks in a floating interest rate. The original rule required creditors to provide the revised Loan Estimate on the date the rate is locked. After hearing feedback from stakeholders, the bureau determined that the short turnaround could potentially pose challenges for creditors that currently allow consumers to lock interest rates late in the day or after business hours. That could result in creditors only allowing consumers to lock interest rates during business hours or even early in the day. Allowing three business days for the new Loan Estimate will give creditors enough time to provide new disclosures without having to reduce flexibility that consumers may have today in locking their rates.

The second change is a minor addition on the Loan Estimate form for loans that involve new home construction. The change creates a space on the Loan Estimate form where creditors could include language informing consumers that they may receive a revised Loan Estimate for a construction loan that is expected to take more than 60 days to settle.

ResWare Integrates with Old Republic Policy Jackets

Adeptive announced that its ResWare platform is now integrated with Old Republic Title Insurance Group's (ORTIG) ezJackets. The integration enables ORTIG's agents to generate electronic policy jackets without leaving the ResWare title software and process flow management system.

Indiana DOI Orders Two Title Agencies to Reimburse Consumers

Two out-of-state title companies were ordered to reimburse consumers and pay administrative penalties by the Indiana Department of Insurance (DOI) for overcharging for title insurance.

Indiana Department of Insurance Commissioner Stephen W. Robertson ordered Prominent Title Agency to refund consumers $30,281 for overcharges. The agency also must pay an administrative penalty of $15,000. The penalty resulted from the agency overcharging for premiums and government fees, and paying unlicensed personnel. The penalty was also the result of the agency's failure to report 475 transactions into the residential real estate database (RREAL IN), implemented by the department in 2010 as a reporting tool to help identify and combat fraud. Prominent Title Agency is based in Cincinnati, Ohio.

Meanwhile, National Title Solutions was ordered to refund consumers $3,839. The company was also ordered to pay an additional administrative penalty of $7,614 for overcharging on premiums and for paying unlicensed personnel for signing HUDs. National Title Solutions is based in Woodridge, Ill.

Two Georgia Counties Begin E-recording with Simplifile

Land records in Fannin and Upson counties in Georgia can now be processed electronically through Simplifile.

With e-recording available, title companies, banks, attorneys, lien filers and other document submitters will be able to electronically prepare, scan or upload documents and submit them for recording through Simplifile's secure, online service in minutes.

With the addition of Fannin and Upson counties, 19 counties in Georgia have adopted Simplifile's e-recording service. Simplifile has implemented its e-recording service in more than 1,180 recording jurisdictions.

Echoworx Unveils New Email Encryption Solution for Title Professionals

Echoworx, a provider of email encryption technology, has launched GoEnbox to offer a low-cost email encryption solution for the land title insurance industry.

Addressing the requirements of organizations of all sizes, Echoworx said GoEnbox offers information, videos and tools, as well as a convenient process to get started with email encryption.

Email is a primary method of communication used by parties involved in real estate transactions. Title industry professionals handling non-public personal information (NPI) need to be compliant and protect the privacy of their clients.

GoEnbox offers a solution to prevent the compromise of personal and financial information. Improving communication and securing the electronic exchange of NPI becomes more important when the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau's integrated mortgage disclosures go into effect on Aug. 1, 2015.

Many underwriters are endorsing the GoEnbox technology in an effort to help title and settlement agents meet regulatory obligations, according to Echoworx.

Study Shows More Than Half of Young Millennials Move Back in With Parents

A recent study of "Boomerang Millennials" who move out of their parents' home only to move back in may have important implications for this key demographic and what it means for the housing market.

According to the study released by the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB), 90 percent of those born between 1980 and 1984 left home before the age of 27—but then more than half returned to their parents' homes.

Studies continue to show that the desire to own a home remains strong for these Millennials. Despite data showing that the age group is delaying household formation, they remain a key demographic in the housing market, and the pent-up demand is expected to translate into housing growth in the coming years.

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Lynette Mendoza Villa
Law Offices Of Lynette Mendoza Villa
Windsor

Mark Spurling
Law Offices of Mark R. Spurling
Vernon

Michael J. McVerry Esq.
Naugatuck

CONNECTICUT CONT.
Jamie K. Gerard
Nevas, Capasse & Gerard, LLC
Westport

William A. Harrison
Reese Hirsch Shoults & Harrison, LLC
Ridgefield

Max Rosenberg
Rosenberg & Press, LLC
Stratford

FLORIDA
Grant Kehres
Grant W. Kehres, PA
Boca Raton

William S. Seagrave
The Seagrave Law Office, PLLC
Daytona Beach

Timothy W. Weber
Weber, Crabb & Wein, P.A.
St. Petersburg

GEORGIA
Jeffrey Watkins
Jeffrey A. Watkins, PC
Cartersville

John E. Mahan
Ellijay

ILLINOIS
C. Michael Witters
Mount Carmel

Daniel J. Bonis
Elgin

David M. Riva
West Frankfort

Dennis G. Kral
Homewood

Richard Caldarazzo
East-West Home Title, Inc.
Oakbrook Terrace

Heidi Coleman
Heidi Weitmann Coleman
Lincolnwood

Joel Hymen
Joel S. Hymen dba Hymen & Blair, PC
Buffalo Grove

Amy M. Felton
Law Office of Amy Muran Felton, LLC
Oak Park

Jay Chie
Law Offices of Jay H. Chie
Des Plaines

Jerry Posluszny
O'Hare Title
Elgin

Ronald D. Stombaugh
Monmouth

Walter Schummer
Libertyville

IOWA
Thomas E. Shie
Shie Law Office, PC
Davenport

INDIANA
Kristen Weiler
Weiler Law Offices, Inc.
Batesville

John G. Wetherill
Wetherill Law Office, LLP
Rockport

LOUISIANA
G. W. Kuhn
Kuhn, G. Wayne
Franklinton

MASSACHUSETTS
John Rogaris
Rogaris Law Office
Waltham

NEW YORK
Lenore Reeves
Cole Schotz Meisel Forman & Leonard P.A.
New York

NORTH CAROLINA
Kevin C. Link
Law Offices of Kevin C. Link
Concord

C. Thomas Steele Jr.
Pittman & Steele, PLLC
Burlington

Elizabeth Holloway
Rossabi Black Slaughter, PA
Greensboro

Kyle M. Britton
The Law Office of Kyle M. Britton, PLLC
Gastonia

OHIO
Stephen D. Martin
Stephen D. Martin,
dba Olentangy Title Agency
Delaware

Thomas P. Webster, Esq.
Belpre

SOUTH CAROLINA
P. Griffin Bell
Bell Carrington & Price, LLC
Greenville

Vonda K. Mociun
Rickenbaker & Mociun
Sumter

You Matter to Members of Congress: Be the Local Expert

Since 1999, GovTrack.us reports that 10,000 to 14,000 bills have been introduced every two-year congressional cycle. While only a small percentage (roughly 3 to 6 percent) actually becomes law, these rules govern everything from how we live to how we conduct business.

There are many moving pieces that ultimately will reshape the mortgage market and how we do business. Issues such as the CFPB's integrated mortgage disclosures, CFPB enforcement, tax reform, GSE reform and cybersecurity regulations will all affect the cost of running a company. In addition, 2016 will be an election year, which could once again change the landscape on Capitol Hill.

There's no doubt the remainder of 2015 will prove pivotal. That's why developing and cultivating relationships with members of Congress is so important. ALTA's Congressional Liaisons program is devoted to fostering political relationships between professionals of the land title industry and their respective members of Congress.

Congressional Liaisons are industry professionals whose goal is to educate members of Congress about the importance of our industry. This is one of the strongest tools we have to build relationships on Capitol Hill. Currently, we have 138 liaisons representing 216 connections to members of Congress. Our liaisons have already laid the groundwork for this year, sharing ALTA's legislative priorities with their legislators. If you or someone you know has a political relationship with a member of Congress, email Awesta Sarkash at *asarkash@alta.org* for details.

Members of Congress rely on their constituents to inform them on how federal policy affects their local community. Knowing and being responsive to the needs and concerns of the voters is one of their top priorities. In some instances, legislators making policy decisions are not fully informed in certain areas. They will rely on the views of their constituents and information provided by experts—such as you. Through constituent letters, phone calls, face-to-face meetings and action alerts through the Title Action Network, legislators learn what's important to the people back home.

In fact, knowing what's really important to you—what your needs are, what's happening in your local area or across the state—is what counts on Capitol Hill. As the legendary Speaker of the House Tip O'Neill often said, "All politics is local." Let's make sure our members of Congress hear our local voices and listen to our local expertise.

— John Voso Jr. NTP, SVP and Manager-Agency Relationship Services for Old Republic National Title Insurance Co.; and chair of the Congressional Liaison Subcommittee of the Title Action Network