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The Real Estate Tech Review

Vol. 1, #2



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TECH REVIEWS, TECHNOLOGY

HomeKeepr keeps agents in touch with clients after the close. But for how long?

This tool is a supplement, not a long-term marketing facet



by [Craig Rowe](#) on April 24, 2015

The pitch

I never recommend restaurants to people.

I tell them about places I've enjoyed, but I never say, "You must go."

You just never know if that's the night a server was served with divorce papers, or if the line cook forgot his hairnet.

Experiences vary. Service is up and down. Even the best chefs have bad nights.

If an agent is going to hinge their ongoing relationship with clients to the hopes of a consistently high level performance of a "preferred vendor," or service at their "favorite cafe," then I feel they're putting their brand at risk.

I feel you should never handcuff your brand to a performance outcome on which you don't have control.

This is what HomeKeepr does.

The sale

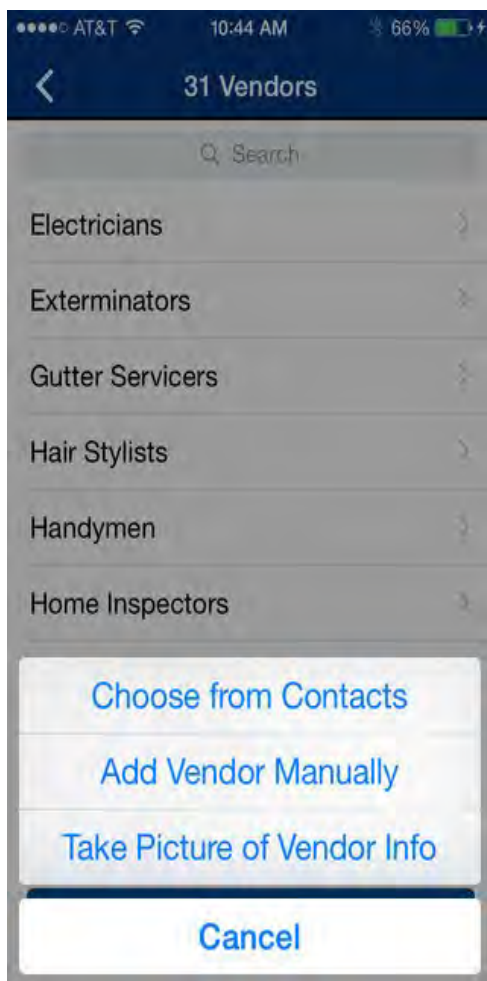
HomeKeepr is a home vendor recommendation app that agents gift to their clients.

After a sale, you simply send them the link for download.

The app comes labeled with your headshot and contact information. HomeKeepr lets you send notes and updates about local events, and it automatically pushes home upkeep alerts to users.

The ultimate point here is to remain in front of your clients for the duration of their time spent in the house you sold them. And that's where I think HomeKeepr is fundamentally flawed.

I take no issue at all with the quality of the programming, the look and feel, or the *initial* effectiveness of the app. But six months after the close? A year? I'm a skeptic.



I have a very hard time believing that in five years, that app is going to remain in place on users' phones, regardless of how many push notifications are sent out.

Almost weekly, I'm doing a quick scan of unused apps just for ways to free up some phone storage. Apps I thought were awesome last night turned out to be attractive icons with slow-to-load, buggy content under the tap.

If it's been three months since something's busted in the house, I kind of have an idea of what's not going to make it through the next app culling.

HomeKeepr looks to eliminate this out-of-touch-out-of-mind challenge by using a pre-ordained list of major home systems as a basis for sending maintenance reminders.

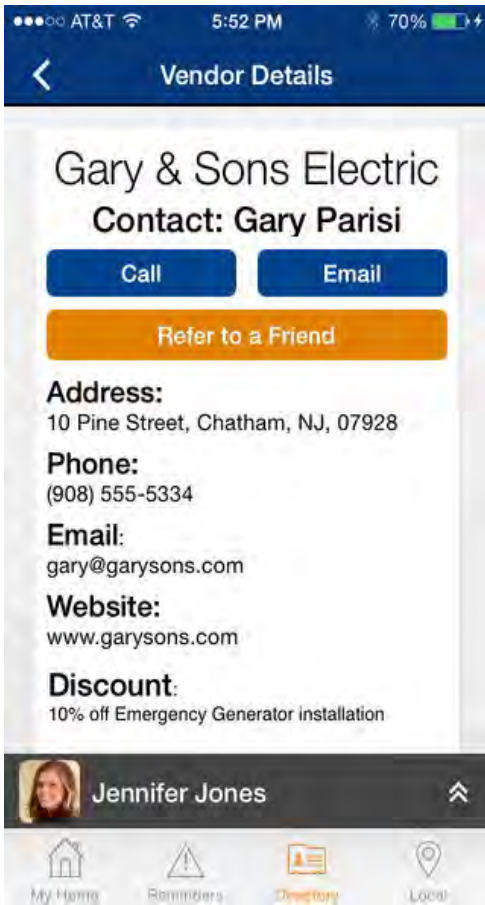
Users answer a few questions about heating and cooling, home location, roof type and floor materials, and HomeKeepr sends alerts when something should be flushed or finished.

Users do have the option of turning off or limiting the notifications, however.

Still, I think the absolute best market for this app are first-time homeowners and buyers who have relocated.

There is no question that agents provide an invaluable service in providing relocation packages and names and numbers. From a marketing perspective, HomeKeepr makes an excellent, affordable value add. For a while.

Experienced homeowners moving within the same market may not be the best audience for your HomeKeepr app. For \$9.99, you get 100 clients, so you'll have some accounts to spare.



When agents log in, they see a clean dashboard with a recent run-down of how many vendors and clients you have, plus a tally of how many emails have been sent to clients. This is a good reminder of how active you should be. I wonder, though: How do emails sent in HomeKeepr get reconciled with a CRM (customer relationship manager), or other robust contact engine in use? It may not be crucial, but it does help to collate all touches to clients.

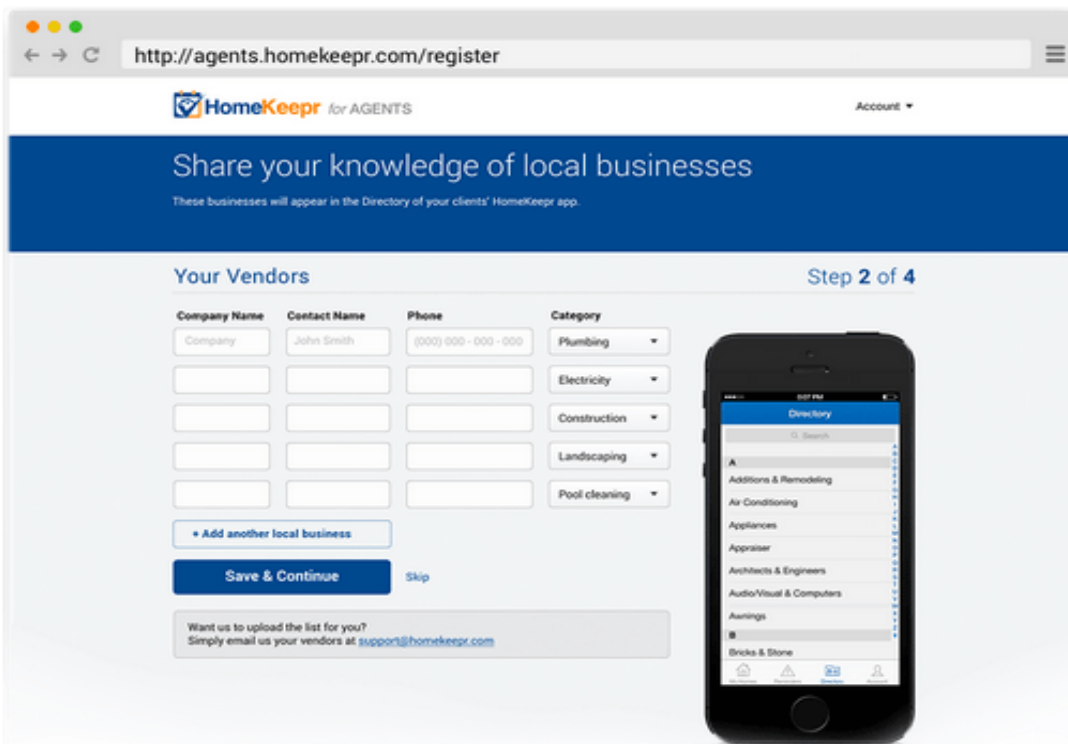
The app functions nicely. Maintenance recommendations are described in detail, along with tips on handling it yourself.

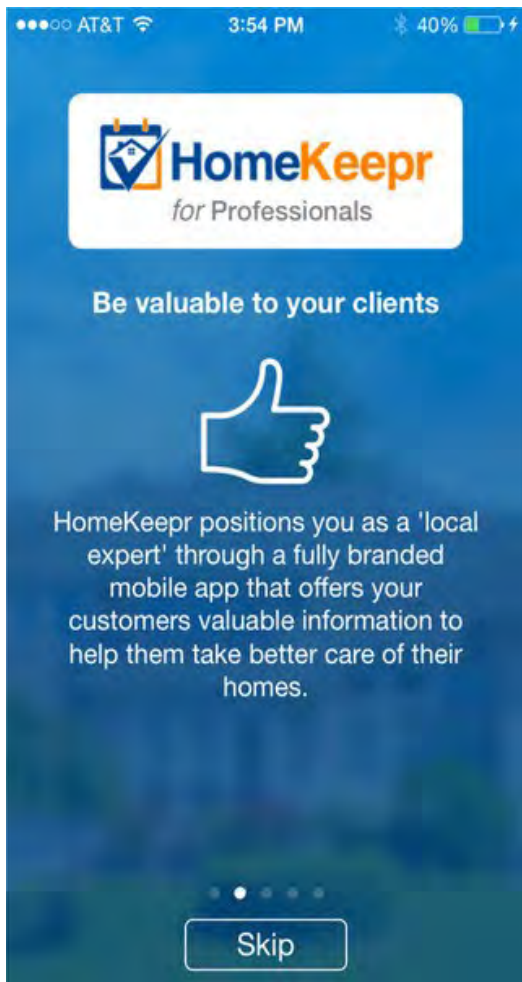
For more complex tasks, the preferred vendor for a repair is a couple of taps away. If for any reason one isn't set up, HomeKeepr swiftly generates an email for the user to ask for one. It's pretty smooth.

Agents can also provide alerts about local events and other nearby services, like soccer tournaments and physical therapists.

I owned a house for a long time. I was no where near as diligent in its upkeep as the app implies I should have been. I wonder, how many homeowners are more like me?

And I don't have kids who need rides to skateboard parks or high school drama events to attend.





The close

Again, HomeKeepr looks great. It functions well, too, even if its calendar of maintenance ideas is a bit presumptuous. I'm not inspecting my driveway.

With ongoing upgrades to the app and consistent attention by agents, it could work. **Localytics** reported in September 2014 that the percentage of apps used only once declined to 20 percent, down from 26 percent in 2010.

My issue is with its positioning as a long-term marketing facet for real estate agents.

At best, it's a supplement.

Mobile user habits alone dictate it would be three screens deep within a few months after closing. Plus, as soon as the first vendor is late to an appointment with a busy mom, there's going to be some trust issues.

I think agents should try HomeKeepr for new and relocating buyers. That's the best use of it. After six months to a year, make sure your CRM is working as it should.

And if you need a new CRM, I know a great technology column ...

Do you use HomeKeepr? What do you think? Leave a comment and let us know!

Do you have a product for our tech expert to review? Email Craig Rowe at craig@inman.com.



THE DAILY REAL ESTATE

TECH REVIEW:

JOTFORM

TECH REVIEWS, TECHNOLOGY

5 simple ways real estate agents can use JotForm

Mastering forms can give you an edge in your real estate business



by [Craig Rowe](#) on Apr 27, 2015

Have suggestions for products that you'd like to see reviewed by our real estate technology expert? Email Craig Rowe at craig@inman.com.

The pitch

A critical part of every website is its capture methodology.

That is, the tactic for leading a site user to your "Contact Us" form, or some such iteration of an online form that results in a person giving you permission to reach out to them.

Forms are under-used, in my opinion. We should put them in more places than contact pages. If your website content is offering unique facts or market data, ask your visitors if they want more of it. Ask them to ask you questions.

Probe. Prod. Ask them to say hi.

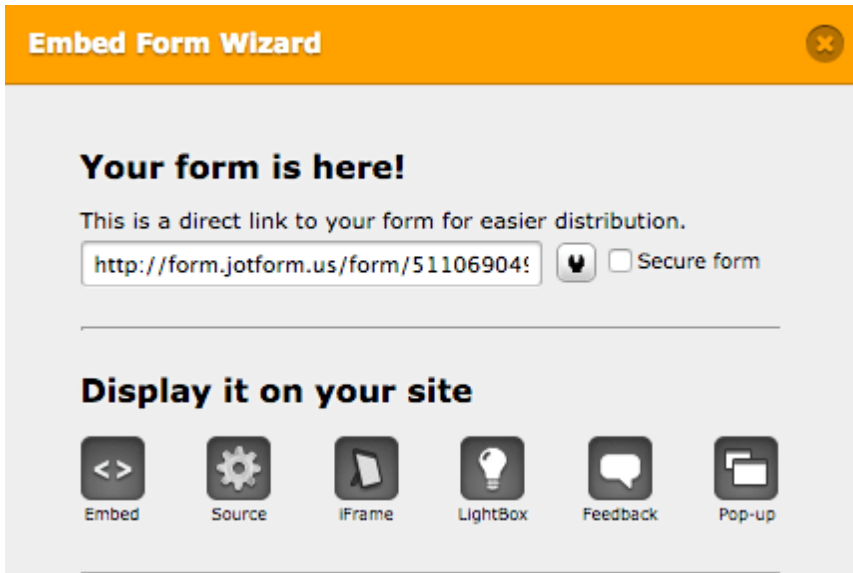
I have to yet to meet a WordPress plugin for form building that's as easy or practical as **JotForm**. Check it out.

Use JotNote to create a simple, tablet-based version of your agency disclosure form. Drop in the same text as what's on the form, insert a text field and a radio "agree" button and watch your rate of successful execution quickly increase.

We are enamored by tablet-based tech, and given our now obvious emotional and physical connection to devices, we're more apt to agree to an iPad screen than a clipboard.

2. Open house sign-ins

You can spend your evening re-keying all the manual sign-ins after your great day of touring prospective buyers (most of which will be spent deciphering handwriting), or you can create a simple tap-and-type form with JotForm.



Embed Form Wizard

Your form is here!

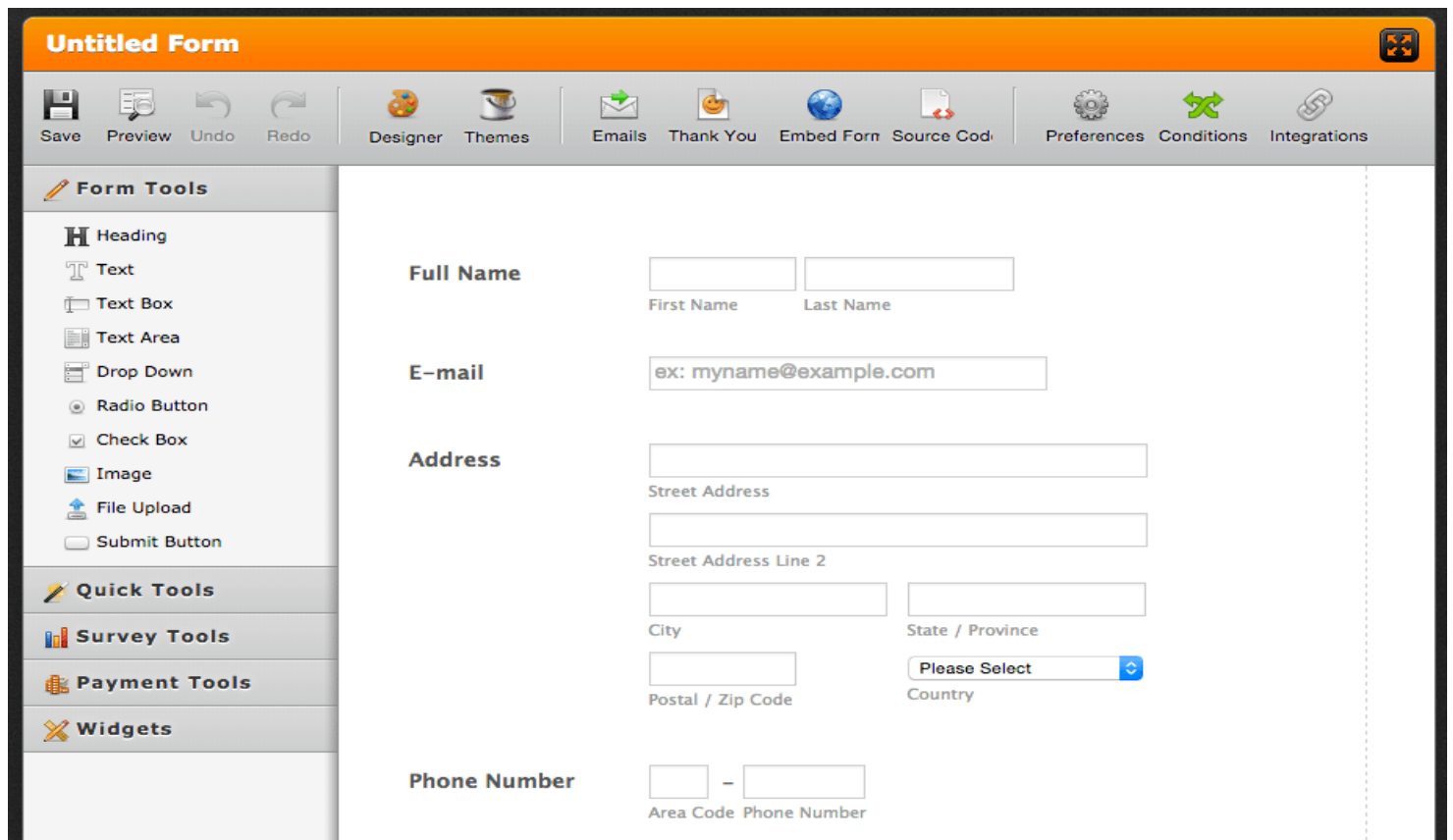
This is a direct link to your form for easier distribution.

<http://form.jotform.us/form/51106904!> Secure form

Display it on your site

Embed Source iFrame LightBox Feedback Pop-up

I built one in under two minutes, using drop down menu options to ask for buying timeframes, a text box for agent name if already represented, and a yes/no box about pre-qualification.



Untitled Form

Save Preview Undo Redo Designer Themes Emails Thank You Embed Form Source Code Preferences Conditions Integrations

Form Tools

- Heading
- Text
- Text Box
- Text Area
- Drop Down
- Radio Button
- Check Box
- Image
- File Upload
- Submit Button

Quick Tools

Survey Tools

Payment Tools

Widgets

Full Name

First Name Last Name

E-mail

ex: myname@example.com

Address

Street Address

Street Address Line 2

City State / Province

Postal / Zip Code Country

Phone Number

Area Code Phone Number

3. Tell me about your house

Use JotForm to ask website visitors about their current home as a way to entice a listing call. JotForm gives you the embed code in one click. Copy and paste it into your WordPress editor and you're done. The responses go directly to your email. From there, you can shoot that data directly into your CRM.

4. Free content

Content marketing is essential today. If you have extensive quarterly reports or neighborhood guides you like to distribute, use JotForm to build the Download our free reports capture for a website embed.

Property Inquiry Form Close x

Property Listing Inquiry

Please fill the form below to know more about the property




Your Name: *

Address

Street Address
Street Address Line 2

[Use template](#)

Property Inquiry Form

 Shared by [formgallery](#)  Cloned 719 times  [Permalink](#)

If you have a real estate listing on a web site, use this form to get people submit details about a property.

5. Post-transaction satisfaction

After the awkward photos of your clients holding their keys at closing, ask them to visit your website for a brief “How Did I Do?” survey? Create specific, revealing questions so you can learn what will make you a better agent. Be honest with yourself, and give clients a reason to fill it out. After completion, send them a note of thanks with your closing gift. Traditional customer service, meet online marketing.

The close

If you're not familiar, JotForm is an utterly simple form-building tool. Its learning curve is minimal and its uses almost countless. You can get a ton of great ideas from the already pretty extensive list of real estate forms others have built. Enter real estate in JotForm.com's Templates page.

You can pay for more powerful iterations of the software, but you can also get a lot for nothing. It's a superb bit of programming and represents everything cool about the power of good coding. Use it.

Do you use JotForm? What do you think? Leave a comment and let us know!

Do you have a product for our tech expert to review? Email Craig Rowe



THE DAILY REAL ESTATE

TECH REVIEW:

REZORA

MARKETING, TECH REVIEWS, TECHNOLOGY

Enterprise marketing software Rezora is a powerful solution for brand-conscious agencies

Are you using marketing power to land more listings?



by [Craig Rowe](#) on April 28, 2015

Have suggestions for products that you'd like to see reviewed by our real estate technology expert? Email Craig Rowe at craig@inman.com.

The pitch

Constantly evolving sales and marketing technologies provide us with amazing audience tracking power and affordable ways to make a single message proliferate across multiple viewing platforms.

How are you leveraging all of this power on behalf of your clients' listings. More importantly, are you using it to get more listings?

It can be hard, I know. Maybe Rezora can help.

The sale

Rezora is a marketing content creation and dissemination platform. And what I like best about it is that its marketing software for marketing people.

Rezora is enterprise-level software for marketing execs and managers who oversee comprehensive branding efforts for large, multi-office brokerages. There's a lot of power here, and career marketing professionals will recognize that Rezora was programmed to make them better at their jobs. However, Rezora is still a great way for agents to manage listing promotion and contact list communications.

After setting up a profile, which would probably be done by a system admin, agents listings, contacts, marketing campaigns and creative materials are accessed on a central dashboard, or Stat Center.


This Stat Center lists current, future or previous campaigns, as well as reader metrics from recent campaigns.

Rezora's interface presents campaign-specific reports, such as number of opens and clicks, among other common email marketing figures. Agents can sort metrics by previous campaigns and find out which contacts are most often engaged.

My Account

Your Profile

Profile Photo
change image: (smaller than 1.5 MB in .GIF, .JPG or .PNG format)
 no file selected




Contact Information
email address:
(used for logging in)
first name:
last name:
work phone:
mobile phone:
company name:
title:
company id:
office street address:
floor or suite number:
city:
state/province:
zip:
country:

Online Links

website:
blog:
facebook:
google+:
linkedin:
pinterest:
twitter:
youtube:

Company Logo
change image: (smaller than 1.5 MB in .GIF, .JPG or .PNG format)
 no file selected



Your Account Information

[change password](#)
[purchase additional services & subscriptions](#)
[view/edit billing information](#)
[emails sent this month](#)

Groups

Select Group

Group Name

You are currently not a member of any groups.

MLS Agent IDs

Select MLS

MLS Name	Agent ID	Delete
Colorado - Vail Board of REALTORS	1083	<input type="button" value="Delete"/>

Activity Report Emails

Daily Emails (recommended)
 Weekly Emails
 Monthly Emails

Send me one now, please!
Period (in days)

API Key

You have not yet created an API Key. You will only need one of these if you wish to connect third-party applications to your Rezora account.

Rezora works with CRMs (customer relationship manager) to embed contacts, but it is not trying match wits with CRMs. Its only intention is to be marketing software; and it excels in that intention.

Marketing teams, whether local or across the country, create and launch campaigns on an ongoing basis to a company's entire list of contacts.

However, Rezora is very pro-agent, granting individual agents tight control of their contact lists, which are also unavailable to other agents.

This feature allows agents to control what larger company campaigns their contacts are subject to. For example, an agent who sells urban lofts may not want his or her list to receive the company piece about its success in marketing golf course properties. However, they may want their list to see the email about being the "Market's Highest Rated Brokerage."

The screenshot displays the Rezora Realty dashboard with a navigation menu including Dashboard, Campaigns, Marketing Materials, Contacts, My Account, and Learning Center. A '100% Up to Date' badge is visible in the top right corner. The main content area is titled 'Create Marketing Piece | Add Property Listings'.

Left Sidebar (Add Property Listings):


- Buttons: Select A Template, Add General Content, Add Property Listings (expanded).
- Text: Drag listings into the red boxes on the right.
- Search: My Listings Search
- Listing Type: Residential (dropdown), Find
- Text: We found 6 listings. Drag individual listings into the designated red boxes on the right.
- Listings:
 - 82 W Timber Draw, Edwards, CO, \$2,495,000, MLS# 917674 (highlighted with a red dashed box)
 - 342 Gore Trail, Edwards, CO, \$3,200,000, MLS# 921094
 - 15 Stag Gulch Ct, Edwards, CO
- Buttons: Save and Continue >, finish later
- Buttons: Add Articles, Review, Distribute

Main Content Area:

- Text: Click on a message area outlined in red to begin editing. HINT: Holding the "Shift" key while hitting "Return" will create a single line space.
- Header: Just Listed - Mountain Paradise in Vail, Sara Fitz Newsletter | April 29, 2015
- Image: Interior view of a house (82 W Timber Draw).
- Text: Drag listings on the left side of this page and drag into this box.
- Text: ...o's finest ski and golf communities, is a luxurious and in residence on 3 acres bordered by over 1,600 pristine BLM
- Text: Find more real estate listings >
- Agent Profile: Sara Fitz, Rezora Realty, 2060 Broadway Suite 430, Boulder, CO 80020. Contact: Sara@company.com, rezora.com, 303.555.4029. Social media icons for Facebook, LinkedIn, Pinterest, and Twitter.

The Stat Center allows agents to easily remain in the campaign, which is the default, or decide not to participate.

Because each agent can see the broader message being broadcast by the central office, so to speak, they can be kept abreast of company brand, messaging themes, and advertising tactics.




Just Listed - Mountain Paradise in Vail

Sara Fitz Newsletter | April 29, 2015

82 W Timber Draw
Edwards, CO

\$2,495,000



Beds	Baths	Sq. Ft.
4	6	5,682

A mountain masterpiece nestled in the quivering aspen on the Ranch at Cordillera. This custom Bob Armstead home features hand-hewn log timbers, five stone fireplaces, a gourmet kitchen and inviting spaces for family and friends to gather. Retreat to your main-level master suite or take a walk outdoors to enjoy the private setting.

[More >](#)

Located in one of Colorado's *finest* ski and golf communities, is a luxurious and expansive private mountain residence on 3 acres bordered by over 1,600 pristine BLM acres.

Real Estate News

Pending US home sales increase in March
Local Source: Edwards | Apr 29, 2015
More Americans signed contracts to buy homes in March, the third straight month of gains as housing heats up with the start...
[Read more](#)

Housing markets across Colorado vary widely, but improving
Local Source: Fort Collins | Apr 26, 2015
Carpenter Manuel Rubio of Van Dyk Construction works on a new home in the Reunion community of Commerce City in February...

In turn, agents can get a strong sense of company culture and sell with a uniform approach. This makes Rezora an excellent resource for agents new to an affiliation.

Collateral templates come in a wide array of formats and purposes, and they are easily customized. Content creators can make editing any facet of the company identity unavailable to agents, so every piece remains aligned with company brand standards.

Thus, agents no longer need to worry about which version of the logo to use, and marketing executives can rest easy knowing a lone wolf broker hasn't decided to rebrand the company in their next newsletter.

Building collateral is simple with Rezora. There is an extensive library of templates that are edited using a simple drag-and-drop content interface.

When it comes to listings, Rezora uses MLS (multiple listing service) agent IDs to load each agent's respective listings into their dashboard.

When building a listing flyer, images are dragged and dropped, basic details simply typed in and links or videos are placed appropriately.

Rezora also pumps in RSS news feeds so agents can include relevant industry stories in whatever they send out to contacts.

The interface is simple and Rezora makes it almost impossible to not build a very professional piece of collateral.

Email distribution lists are made easy to segment, as Rezora stresses that the more specific your list, the more you can learn about your audience.

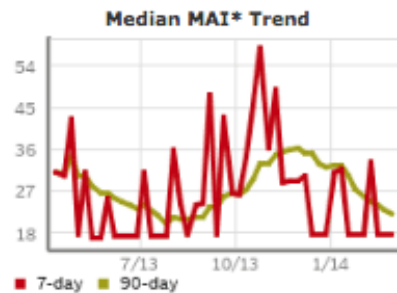
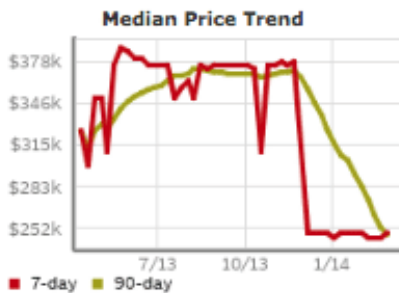
Ultimately, provided the marketing staff is consistently populating the system with campaigns, agents can feel confident that their contacts are being regularly contacted with quality, tightly-branded content about their company.

Your Executive Summary Market Report for 80510 (Single-family Residences).

Check out the Market Report for March!

Real-Time Market Profile		Trend
Median List Price	\$249,000	↔
Asking Price Per Square Foot	\$221	↑
Average Days on Market (DOM)	273	↕
Percent of Properties with Price Decrease	0.08%	
Percent Relisted (reset DOM)	0%	
Percent Flip (Price Increased)	0%	
Median House Size (sq ft)	1,463	
Median Lot Size	0.77 acres	
Median Number of Bedrooms	2.0	
Median Number of Bathrooms	1.0	
Market Action Index (MAI)*	17.9	↘

* The Market Action Index answers the question "How's the market?" by measuring the current rate of sale versus the amount of inventory. An index above 30 implies seller's market conditions. Below 30, buyer's.



Quartiles

Investigate the market in quartiles – where each quartile is 25% of the homes ordered by price.

Quartile	Median Price	Sq. Ft.	Lot Size	Beds	Baths	Age	Listings	New	DOM
Top/First	\$575,000	2,488	19.00 acres	3.0	1.0	63	3	0	273
Upper/Second	\$385,000	1,738	2.00 acres	2.0	1.5	93	3	1	196
Lower/Third	\$240,000	1,200	0.41 acres	2.0	1.0	94	3	0	315
Bottom/Fourth	\$130,000	715	0.51 acres	2.0	0.0	74	4	0	249



Doris Fitzgerald
 Rezora
 303-800-4000
demo@rezorasir.rezora.com
rezora.com



The close

Again, Rezora is a big investment in marketing, and not from the financial perspective. This is for the committed brokerage teams with a multi-market message to share.

For larger agencies wanting to get a handle on how their agents represent the office brand, and help them do a better a job of managing their own, Rezora could be a great solution.

Digital marketing is about being flexible and reactive, and Rezora does an excellent job of allowing real estate marketing teams to be exactly that.

If managed right and embraced, this is as well-rounded a total marketing solution as you'll find in the industry.

Do you use Rezora? What do you think? Leave a comment and let us know!

Do you have a product for our tech expert to review? Email Craig Rowe at craig@inman.com.



THE DAILY REAL ESTATE

TECH REVIEW:

FOLLOWUP.CC

TECH REVIEWS, TECHNOLOGY

FollowUp.cc is a simple and affordable email additive that could replace your CRM

How an email plug-in could transform your life



by [Craig Rowe](#) on April 29, 2015

Have suggestions for products that you'd like to see reviewed by our real estate technology expert? Email Craig Rowe at craig@inman.com.

The pitch

To what extent are you really using your CRM (customer relationship manager)? Is it an every day, all-day level of engagement?

Or, like most of us, are you only logging in to find an email address? Or when you get desperate for a lead after some silly cold-calling coaching plan crumbled?

It's understandable. Enterprise software investments can be as daunting operationally as many are financially.

This is why I so often discuss user interface quality and visual ergonomics in these columns. People have to want to use software.

What if I told you that there's a simple email plugin that can do the most important tasks of a CRM without asking you to change the way you work?

Follow along ...

The sale

FollowUp.cc is all about engagement. Once on board, you can't *not* use it.

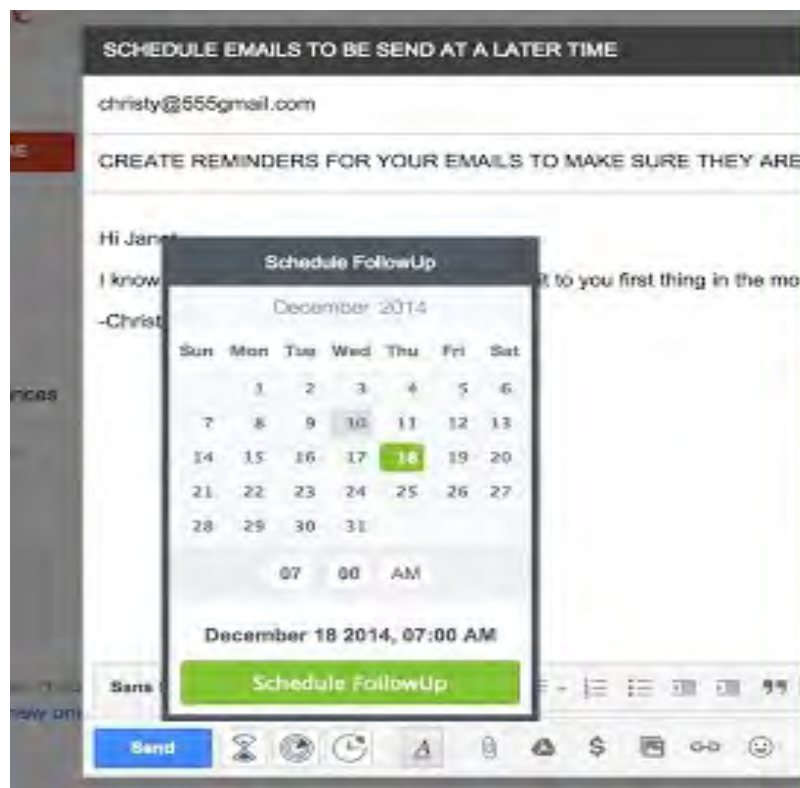
The software functions essentially as an email plugin, but with a great deal more capability. You simply forward to the future any message in your inbox to a "@followup.cc" domain, using a specific time as the user name.

Let's say your mortgage broker contact sent you information about an unrepresented couple that had some general qualification questions. You're assured they're a good lead but that it's going to be a few months before they act.

Using FollowUp.cc, forward your buddy's email to "3weeks@followup.cc" and then delete it. Reminder set.

If you want to act faster, send it to "tomorrow@followup.cc." The scheduling options are almost endless.

Using FollowUp.cc is like controlling time without needing 1.21 gigawatts. It keeps you accountable for your procrastination.



SCHEDULE EMAILS TO BE SEND AT A LATER TIME

christy@555gmail.com

CREATE REMINDERS FOR YOUR EMAILS TO MAKE SURE THEY ARE

Hi Janet

I know

-Christ

to you first thing in the mor

Schedule FollowUp

December 2014

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

07 00 AM

December 18 2014, 07:00 AM

Schedule FollowUp

Send

Send Later
Be more productive by scheduling emails to send in the future.

Open Track
Gain valuable customer insights by tracking when an email is opened.

Follow Up
Schedule follow ups for important items and never lose a lead.

When it's time to get in touch, FollowUp email reminders come embedded within the native conversation. Or, you can choose to have it sent separately.

I think it's best used when the reminder is sent within the context of its purpose. You have the option to include any attachments in each follow-up.

FollowUp.cc lets you add a custom subject line prefix to reminder messages so they're immediately recognizable as an action, a great benefit when Gmail's stacked conversation threads become too cumbersome.

FollowUp.cc has an extensive list of email shorthand to make your reminders simple to set-up. Because the address variables are many, FollowUp.cc offers a cheat sheet you can print or bookmark.

Unread

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	FollowUp.cc	REMIND Fwd: do I have a review for tomorrow? - Fc
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Black Diamond Equipment	Facebook Support Nepal
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	CMSWire News	CMSWire Today: How Evergage Makes Google Anal
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Inman.com	Contact from Inman.com - Name: Raymond Pressley
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Inman.com	Contact from Inman.com - Name: Chris Thompson En

If that's not for you, send a blank email to "auto@followup.cc" to trigger an auto response that copies back to you the most common scheduled timeframes. By responding again, all of these time addresses are dropped into your contacts so they'll auto-complete as you draft a message. Slick.

By setting up daily or weekly reminders using FollowUp.cc, you can also use it for tasks that don't emanate from an email conversation. This is an ideal way to follow up with various stakeholders leading up to a closing, or to tell yourself to call your listings with a showings update. Or that it's your daughters' birthday.

For example, send yourself a weekly reminder to call a particular contact with "mon*@followup.cc" or "everyfri-7am@followup.cc."

For agents who track potential relocation customers with longer buying windows, use a "monthly@" or even "yearly@followup.cc" address.

Since FollowUp.cc embeds its reminders within the communication chain, why re-key every note into a more advanced, more expensive CRM?

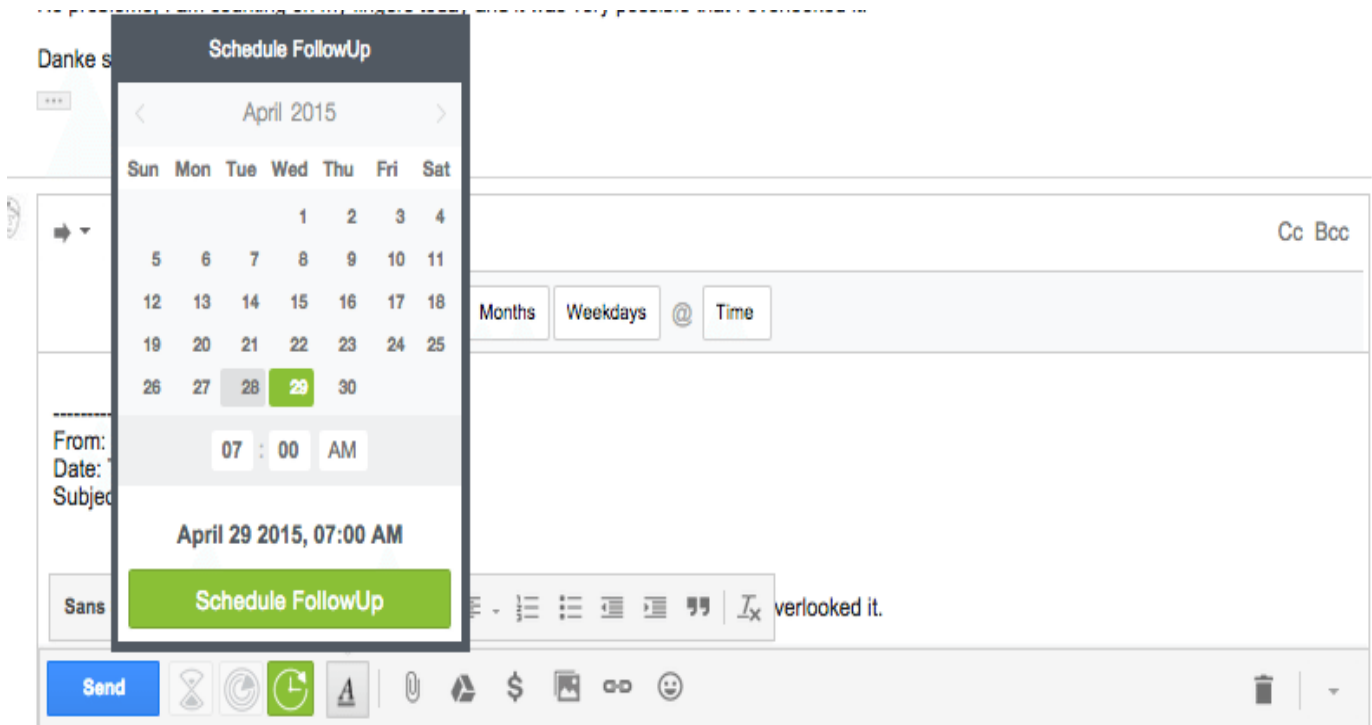
Reminder Emails

- Send me an email when a reminder is due (*recommended*)
 - Send me a confirmation email after I create a reminder via @followup.cc
- ➔ Prefix subject lines on my reminders. This can be useful for proper threading in some email clients:

example: 'Re:' or 'Fwd:'

You can also get email tracking capabilities with FollowUp.cc. I've personally never seen value in knowing when someone opens an email. Opening a message and digesting its content are two entirely different things. I open emails all the time just to find a reason to never hear from that person or business again.

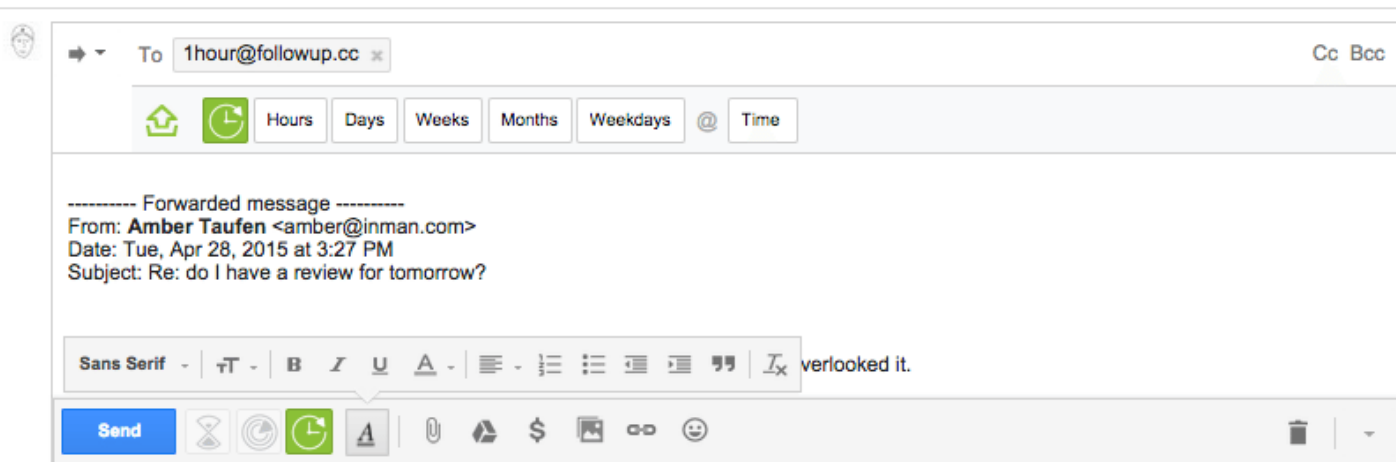
What would a follow-up tool be without a snooze button? FollowUp.cc includes a small window of optional follow-up times in each message. Pick one and move on. I like this kind of flexibility at my fingertips. Real estate transactions are fraught with delays and missed deadlines. When the mortgage broker tells you to call next week for another update, you can snooze that call for another seven days in two clicks.



Any FollowUp time address can also be entered into the BCC field so clients and vendors don't know you're already planning on future outreach. This puts the sales action directly at the point of engagement, a very effective way to streamline how you manage business processes. Moreover, you can also schedule reminders for an entire team by simply entering the appropriate timeframe in the CC field of any multi-party email.

I think it defeats the purpose to have a daily summary of outstanding reminders sent to you, but FollowUp.cc provides that option. I think the intrinsic value of an automated reminder tool is the initial task being out of sight until its due to be addressed. Still, this is only an option, not the default.

While you don't have to sign-on to your FollowUp.cc account to use it, when you do, you're presented with a calendar view of future (and previous, if desired) reminders. You can sort these by email address and scan forward or back several months.



The close

FollowUp.cc is smart, productive software. You can pick it up in minutes, then take time to get a handle on the more advanced features. Even those come quick. It will help you the first day you create an account.

You can combine FollowUp functionality with document management tools like Box.com and Google Drive, as well with Evernote and your Salesforce account.

However, I like FollowUp.cc just how it is, always there, always easy.

For agents not enamored with large software buys or the operational commitment of a full-fledged CRM, give this powerful email bolt-on a try. There's also an iPhone app.

FollowUp.cc accounts start at \$4 per month, and it also works with Outlook.

FollowUp.cc is a CRM in its most valuable form.

Do you use FollowUp.cc? What do you think? Leave a comment and let us know!

Do you have a product for our tech expert to review? Email Craig Rowe at craig@inman.com



THE DAILY REAL ESTATE

TECH REVIEW:

RETHINK CRM

TECH REVIEWS, TECHNOLOGY

REthink CRM is a worthwhile mix of marketing, process automation and office interaction

A tool that comes close to 'does it all' status



by [Craig Rowe](#) on April 30, 2015

Have suggestions for products that you'd like to see reviewed by our real estate technology expert? Email Craig Rowe at craig@inman.com.

The pitch

Sometimes we apply a label to something because an adequate description doesn't already exist.

For example, Nexst is a sweet bit of programming that manages business processes. But, "business processes" is kind of esoteric, and doesn't sound very "real estate." So let's call it transaction management.

Mobile phones are now called mobile devices because early adopters are driving new forms of physical device collaboration and functional conglomeration. More for less. Convenience above effectiveness.

REthink calls itself a CRM, but it's not that easily defined. It offers much more.

If you happen to be looking for something much more, then please, read on.

The sale

I've made it very clear that CRMs scare me because in their makers' effort to build the perfect beast, they create a Frankenstein's monster of well-meaning but dysfunctional parts.

I think that **REthink CRM** might give us all reason to call off the torch mob.

REthink is part marketing tool, part CRM, part office manager. It also handles business automation with handy, customizable action plans (very similar to Nekst) for every facet of a real estate office's reason for being.

Smaller teams and agencies can benefit by using REthink's multi-tiered feature set. Although, I see the most value in its intrinsic overlap of disparate business functions that would appeal to managing a large number of processes, making it more suited for bigger firms seeking an enterprise solution, a "one ring to rule them all" type of thing.

Users will see a home screen of sorts upon login. Your menu of options is neatly splayed across the top center of the screen, leading you visually over to your App Selector drop-down. From the App Selector, choose whether to interact with the system as a buyer's agent or listing agent. Brokers and marketing staff have their views, too. It's all permission-based.

The screenshot shows the REthink CRM interface. At the top, there is a search bar and user information for Scott Sullivan, a Residential Agent. The main navigation menu includes Home, My Day, Contacts, Listing Browser, Listings, Offers, Closings, Reports, Dashboards, and Files. The current view is 'Apply Action Plan'.

Action Plan Detail (Apply | Cancel)

Action Plan Description

Action Plan: Preparing Listing (Add New Action Plan)

Start Date: 4/29/2015 (4/29/2015)

Related Objects

- Mitch Jackson

Activities

Select	Name	Assigned To	Priority	Days after start date	Due Date	Send Email	Reminder	Add to Calendar	Comments	Attachment
<input type="checkbox"/>	Set Appointment	Caroline MacMah	Normal	0	4/29/2015 [4/29/2015]	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	(Add)	Remove Task
<input type="checkbox"/>	Prepare Pre-listing	Scott Sullivan	Normal	0	4/29/2015 [4/29/2015]	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	(Add)	Remove Task
<input type="checkbox"/>	Absorption Rate	Scott Sullivan	Normal	0	4/29/2015 [4/29/2015]	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	(Add)	Remove Task
<input type="checkbox"/>	Short form CMA	Scott Sullivan	Normal	1	4/30/2015 [4/29/2015]	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	(Add)	Remove Task
<input type="checkbox"/>	Send letter *Thar	Caroline MacMah	Normal	5	5/4/2015 [4/29/2015]	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	(Add)	Remove Task
<input type="checkbox"/>	Net Sheet	Caroline MacMah	Normal	1	4/30/2015 [4/29/2015]	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	(Add)	Remove Task

Add Activity (Apply | Cancel)

The layout exercises iconography and a suitable user interface (UI) to pull users around to key feature silos. Some of the surface visuals are a tad dated; but most importantly, all of the touch points are organized very well — nothing is out of place in a system with many moving parts.

Users are neatly presented with a task list, contact access and upcoming events that can be synced from both Gmail and Outlook calendars.

You can sort through your Buyer and Listing contacts easily to access what you need to do for each. Through this menu, you can roll out a long-term drip email campaign for a listing that just sold. Or start your prelisting activities.

For busy marketers, REthink includes templates and some sample email copy, but feel free to customize it for your client.

The screenshot displays the REthink CRM interface for the user 'Caroline MacMahon'. The top navigation bar includes 'Home', 'My Day', 'Contacts', 'Associates', 'Expenses & Income', 'Documents', 'Dashboards', and 'Reports'. The 'Associates' section is active, showing the profile of Caroline MacMahon. The profile includes fields for Associate Name, Active status, Mobile number, Specialty, Title, User, Work Phone, Work Ext., Email, Start Date, and End Date. Below the profile is a 'Production Metrics' section with a bar chart showing sales for July, August, and September 2015. To the right is a 'My Activities This Month' donut chart showing 'Completed' (1) and 'Not Started' (9) activities. A sidebar on the left contains 'Recent Items' and 'REthink Resources'.

Month	Production Metrics
July 2015	\$21,240.00
August 2015	\$24,960.00
September 2015	\$30,900.00

Activity Status	Record Count
Completed	1
Not Started	9

Sort your contacts by lead quality, buyers, sellers, most often contacted, or however you'd like to parse them. A slick bit of programming reveals itself when you choose contact type. Contact classification is all customizable.

Since REthink is based wholly on Salesforce, the contact management and richness of the relational databases are proven powerful. In other words, the chassis is sound.

For internal teams, access to each other's contacts can be requested when a listing shows up that matches a colleague's buyer's preferences, which leads me to another slick manipulation of ones and zeros within REthink:

When you enter a new buyer contact's home preferences, REthink automatically delivers a list of current matches from your MLS connection.

The screenshot displays the REthink software interface for a closing. At the top, it shows the closing name '3305 Gilbert St - 1938945: 4/28/2015' and a 'Closing' status. Below this is a social feed with a post from Scott Sullivan asking if a survey can be ordered. The sidebar on the left contains navigation options like 'Create New...', 'Shortcut', 'Recent Items', and 'REthink Resources'. The main content area features a 'Closing Detail' section with a table of information and a 'Commissions' table.

Closing Detail	
Closing Name	3305 Gilbert St - 1938945: 4/28/2015
Listing	3305 Gilbert St - 1938945
Buyer	Craig Rowe
Closing Agency	Barlows
Owner	Scott Sullivan [Change]
Closing Status	Pending
Deal Type	Purchase
Broker Representation	Seller
Accepted Offer	Off-0000018

Commissions	
Transaction Commission (%)	2.50%
My Split	75.00%
Broker/Brokerage Split	25.00%
Co-Agent %	0.00%
Transaction Commission (\$)	\$10,875.00
My Commission	\$8,156.25
Broker/Brokerage Commission	\$2,718.75
Co-Agent Commission	\$0.00

REthink then bolsters its MLS surveys with any pocket listings held within your office, positioning you as a highly plugged-in representative of your clients' best interests. (Pocket listings emanate from colleagues entering their clients' properties into REthink via its Listing tool)

When viewing buyer contacts, users are presented with workflow options that relate only to buyer representation, like arranging property tours and viewing just listed. Same goes for seller contacts.

Agents can build a quick market survey to email customers, along with a Google Map tour that includes nearby amenities. It can also be delivered via PDF.

This process-specific functionality is an intuitive way for the software to lead you through what drives your day; and it makes REthink stand out from other "CRMs." You don't just open it to find a phone number.

It's smart to not make an individual contact the center of workflow. Instead, REthink focuses first on the business process. Thus, it helps agents be better business managers.

The screenshot displays the REthink Residential CRM interface. At the top, there is a search bar and navigation tabs including Home, My Day, Contacts, Listing Browser, Listings, Offers, Closings, Reports, Dashboards, and Files. Below the navigation is a search filter section with options for Search by City, Zip, Address, Listing, Listing Type, Status, Property Type, Price, Beds, Baths, and More. The main content area is divided into a map on the left and a list of listings on the right. The map shows Austin, Texas, with a pop-up window for a property at 3417 Cedar St, priced at \$285,000, with 3 bedrooms and 1.5 bathrooms. The listing list on the right includes four properties with their addresses, prices, and statuses.

Address	Price	Status	Details
115 Waller St - 9802881	\$272,000.00	For Sale, Active - Available	3.0 bd, 2.0 ba, Single Family
3208 John Campbells Trail - 9827380	\$330,000.00	For Sale, Contingent/Pending	2.0 bd, 2.5 ba, Condo
3305 Gilbert St - 1938945	\$450,000.00	For Sale, Contingent/Pending	3.0 bd, 3.0 ba, Single Family
1632 S 1st St - 4247343	\$350,000.00	For Sale, Active - Available	3.0 bd, 1.5 ba, Condo
2933 Pannell St - 9827873			

REthink's Chatter tool is an ever-present method of internal talk that can avoid the back-and-forth confusion of managing transactions via email. You can hashtag conversations based on property or person to hasten solutions.

There's also a systemwide search tool placed on the top of every screen that scans not just contacts, but everything in the system.

If you choose to hook up an MLS feed, do all of your market surveys directly in REthink. Again, this avoids having to interact with multiple software products to gain information required to go about your day.

The close

REthink is a very organized, practical and clearly real estate-centered business software solution.

It can help you market, help brokers manage agents, and help agents manage clients. Its mobile version is equally sharp and robust, so expect much of the same. It also has a comprehensive reporting mechanism for a range of measurables, such as closings, estimated annual revenue, commissions paid, etc. There's always more software I review (well, in most cases) than what my word count and appreciation of your time allows. Rest assured, the rest of what I saw in REthink looks good, too.

Do you use REthink CRM? What do you think? Leave a comment and let us know! Do you have a product for our tech expert to review? Email Craig Rowe at craig@inman.com



TECHNOLOGY

Monthly tech roundup: the best products of April 2015

Our expert picks his top 5 tools from the past month of reviews



by [Craig Rowe](#) on May 1, 2015

Have suggestions for products that you'd like to see reviewed by our real estate technology expert? Email Craig Rowe at atcraig@inman.com.

Thank you for reading this column. It's a lot of fun to write, and inspiring to hear about how you use what I review. Or, how you'd rather it be hacked into oblivion.

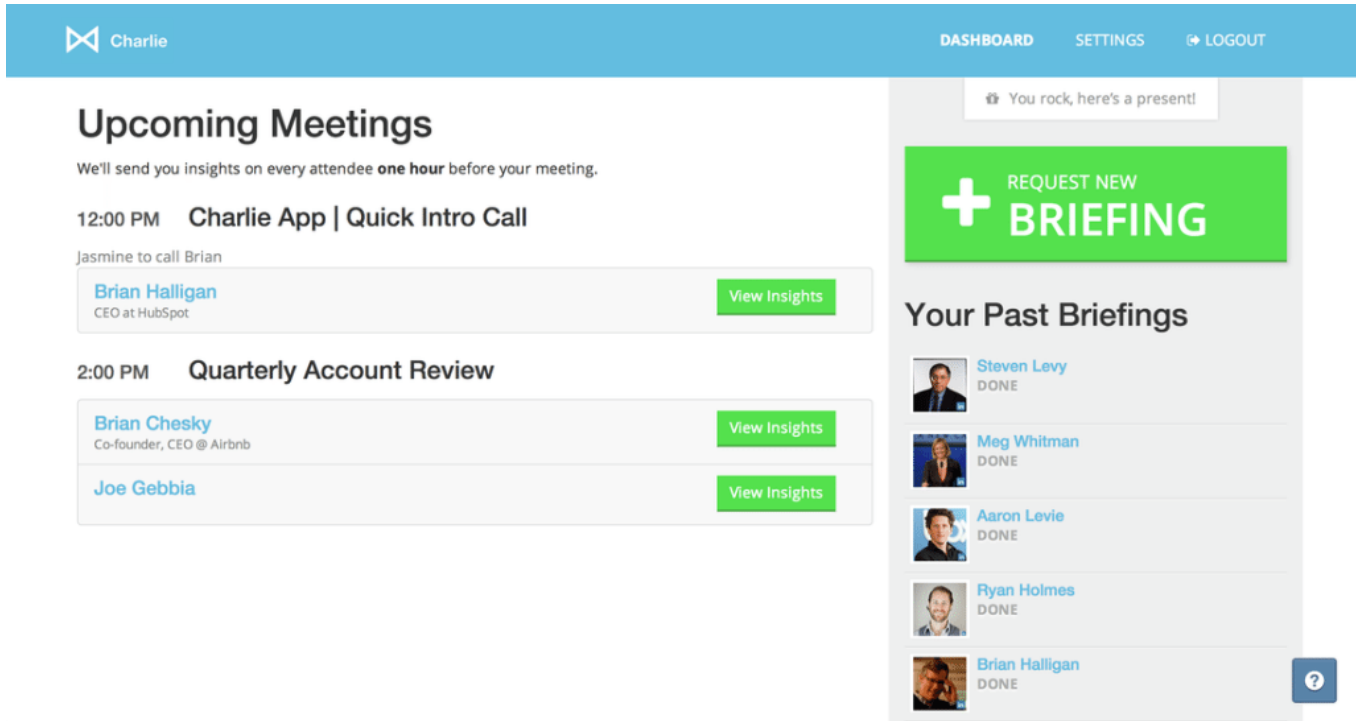
But I know that you can't tune in every day. After all, isn't that why we have DVRs and binge watching? You have homes to sell.

This monthly summary of tech standouts is designed to help you catch up. We're aiming to provide one every 30 days or so.

If you want even more, **we assembled a 240-page e-book** of my reviews since this column's inception back in March.

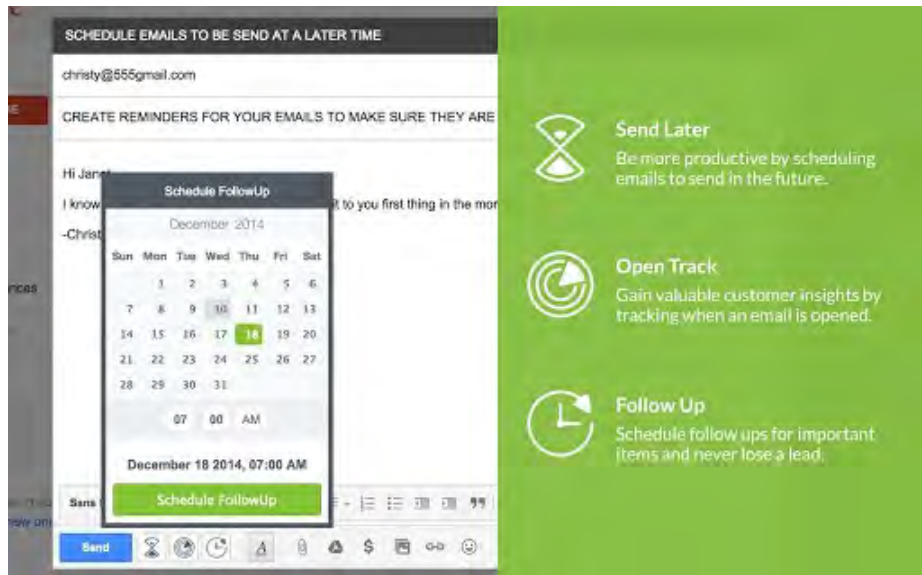
Is your favorite here?

Charlie

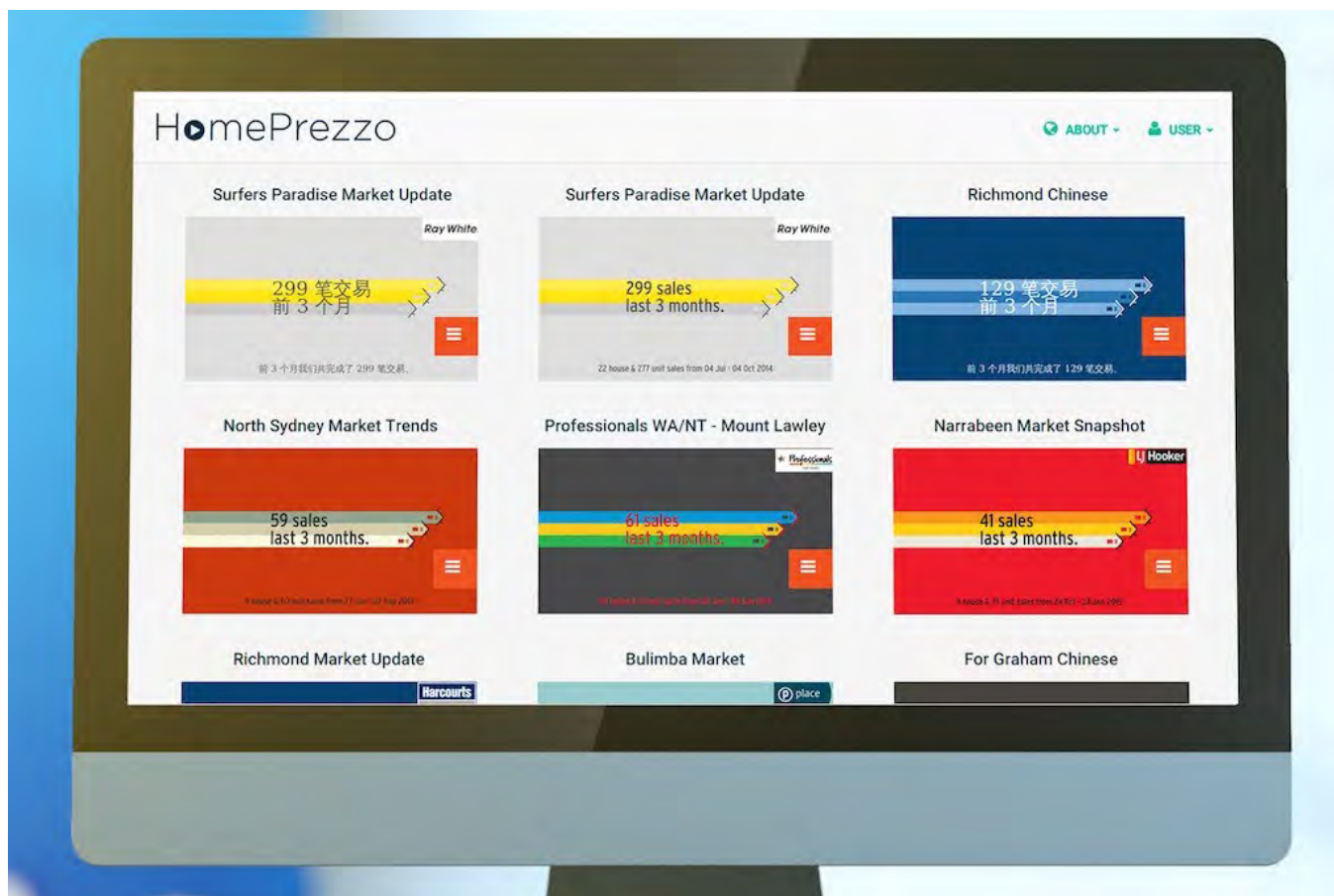


This innovative prospect research tool is a fast and powerful way to learn about the people who may want to hire you. Simply plug in your prospect's name a few days before a meeting and within at least an hour before you sit down, you'll receive a clean, curated page of information about your prospect. Charlie latches on to your Gmail or Outlook calendar to scan for appointments. It's all automated and, frankly, a little scary to learn just how much we all put out there for the Internet to see. Nevertheless, it's the price of business. And Charlie will help you get more of it.

FollowUp.cc



This sharp reminder tool embeds directly into an email client to quickly enhance the way we manage the deluge of business-critical information streaming into our inboxes. Using an array of time-based email addresses, like “nextweek@followup.cc (mailto:nextweek@followup.cc)” or “mon-8am@followup.cc (mailto:mon-8am@followup.cc),” you can push off things that can wait in favor of projects and people who can’t. You can also use it to better manage yourself. Can you reach the state of “Inbox Zero”?



HomePrezzo

Provided the U.S. version hits the States soon (it’s active in Australia), you should grab hold of this easy and creative presentation tool. There’s nothing more painful for your listing prospects than having to sit through a fact-filled, bulleted library of PowerPoint slides that purport to tell them just how innovative you can be when selling their house. Have mercy, people, you’re in someone’s home.

Try HomePrezzo instead. It integrates fully animated infographic-style design with regional market information. It’s compelling and different. Unlike whatever Microsoft makes.

Nekst

Finally, an original approach to managing the most critical business processes in real estate. Nekst lets users build custom action lists for each phase of a sale, like a “Closing Plan” or “Pre-Listing Plan.” When you enter each phase, simply follow your plan. Users can engage clients and outside vendors when it’s time for them to do their part, like stage a home or email the

The screenshot displays the Nekst web application interface. On the left is a vertical navigation menu with the Nekst logo at the top, followed by a user profile for Brett (BK BRETT), and menu items for PROPERTIES, TASKS, CALENDAR, PEOPLE, PLANS, and SUPPORT. The main content area is titled "1234 Inman Dr PENDING" with a gear icon. Below the title are filters for "TODAY'S TASKS (0)", "PAST DUE (0)", "TOMORROW (1)", and "FULL CHECKLIST". A "KEY DATES" button is also visible. A dashed box contains a "+ ADD A TASK" link. Below this is a task entry: "Apr 15 Collect Mortgage Quotes For Loan". A modal form is open for editing this task, showing the title "Collect Mortgage Quotes for Loan", a date field set to "04/15/2015", and a "Time (optional)" field. There are checkboxes for "Key Date?" and "Private?". A text area contains a note: "When shopping for a mortgage, I recommend you compare mortgage quotes from different mortgage lenders to find the best option for your budget. The best way to identify which loans you should focus on will be to find out your credit score and determine the approximate down payment that you can afford. The answer to these two questions will narrow down your options to...". Below the note is a "Transaction Parties" section with "Assigned" and "Visible" status indicators. It lists "Buyer" (Brett Keppler (Nekst CEO)) and "Seller" (Craig Rowe). At the bottom of the modal are "UPDATE TASK", "CANCEL", and "REMOVE" buttons.

inspection report. Tasks are permission-based, and each plan unravels according to the start and end dates of a contract or listing. Plus, Nekst isn't trying to be a CRM. It manages everything after you secure the contact.

Beegit

The screenshot displays the Beegit web application interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with the Beegit logo and links for Dashboard, Create a project, Help Docs, and Admin. On the right, a user profile for 'mike' is shown with a 'Sign out' button. Below the navigation bar, the current project is identified as 'contentable / Great Content'. A secondary navigation bar includes links for Files, Versions, Collaborators, Metrics, and Settings. The main content area shows a document titled 'The Purpose of Education' with a status of 'All changes saved'. The document text is displayed in a monospaced font, with a yellow highlight on the sentence: 'education should furnish them with noble ends rather than means to an end.' To the left of the document is a sidebar with a 'Project Files' section containing a list of files: 'I Have a Dream', 'I've Been To The Mountain Top', 'Kick Up Dust', 'Preaching Ministry', and 'The Purpose of Education' (which is selected). To the right of the document, there is a comment box with two comments: one from 'amber' saying 'This is great!' and one from 'mike' saying 'Thanks, I think it works well.' with 'Edit' and 'Delete' options.

A purely creative tool for agents who pride themselves on being polysyllabic enough to craft copy more compelling than “stunning open floor plan” and “cozy breakfast nook,” Beegit lets writers write and creative teams collaborate. Granted, this is probably more suited to ad firms and pro copywriters, but it can quickly help you become more efficient in your property marketing. You can connect to any number of online content repositories, like Box, Dropbox and Google Drive, and also quickly publish what you create to your social media channels.

You may have noticed that I work to understand how software not developed in the real estate milieu can help agents. Business, as the cliché goes, is business. The agent who manages theirs best is more apt to win the listing.

I hope you don't believe that you can't be good at real estate without the stuff I write about in this column. You can be.

However, there comes a point in your growth where you have to decide to remain static, or progress. It's at that crossroads where you should start believing in the power of business software.

That's the point at which I hope to help.

Do you use any of these products in your business? What do you think? Leave a comment and let us know!

Do you have a product for our tech expert to review? Email Craig Rowe at craig@inman.com.



THE DAILY REAL ESTATE

TECH REVIEW:

FIVESTREET

TECH REVIEWS, TECHNOLOGY

FiveStreet automates online lead follow-up

Maximize your smartphone by installing this clever tool



by [Craig Rowe](#) on May 4, 2015

Have suggestions for products that you'd like to see reviewed by our real estate technology expert? Email Craig Rowe at craig@inman.com.

The pitch

I must be getting old.

I spend a lot of time watching the birds in my backyard. They flit and chirp and fly in energetic bursts among the feeders. They never sit still, always pecking at an opportunity to feed. They hover for a moment to scan for a window among the masses, then dive in again. This goes on all day.

I suppose they know the feeder eventually gets empty, so they need to pluck from the suet block as much sustenance as they can before the pipeline empties. Or until I can get back to Home Depot.

The real estate business is like this. Commissions are limited; there is no constant source of income. You need to be quick, mobile. You have families to feed.

Maybe **FiveStreet** can help.

The sale

I've never met a real estate agent who is uncomfortable saying, "I'm sorry, I need to take this call."

As long as they don't put a finger up to condescendingly silence me, I'm fine with it. I can hear your phone ringing, I know you need to take it.

It's the nature of the business. Every call is the next listing, the next lead. So FiveStreet capitalizes on this dependency by making your mobile phone into a lead catchall, a hand-held digital cistern of prospective homebuyers and sellers.

I believe we're beyond calling tools like FiveStreet an "app." It's mobile software that automates lead follow-up, facilitates collaboration among brokerage teams, and positions agent-users as client-centric and tech-savvy.

FiveStreet does not create leads, but instead ensures you're quick to follow up with them. It attaches to an array of common lead generation methods and routes them to its interface on your phone.

Probably the most typical FiveStreet workflow starts with a contact captured from your website. That email is routed directly to FiveStreet, which triggers an automated email or text follow-up on your behalf.

Thanks for your email!



Inbox x



Mike Jones

4:45 PM (22 minutes ago) ☆



to me ▾

Thanks for getting in touch. I check my email three times per day at 8AM, 1PM and 7PM. I will be sure to get back to you then. If you need to speak to me urgently please call 555.666.7777.

Thanks,
Mike



Click here to [Reply](#) or [Forward](#)

I know some may take issue with the idea of a canned response. However, I think that as a collective business community, we're over it by now. It's just so common.

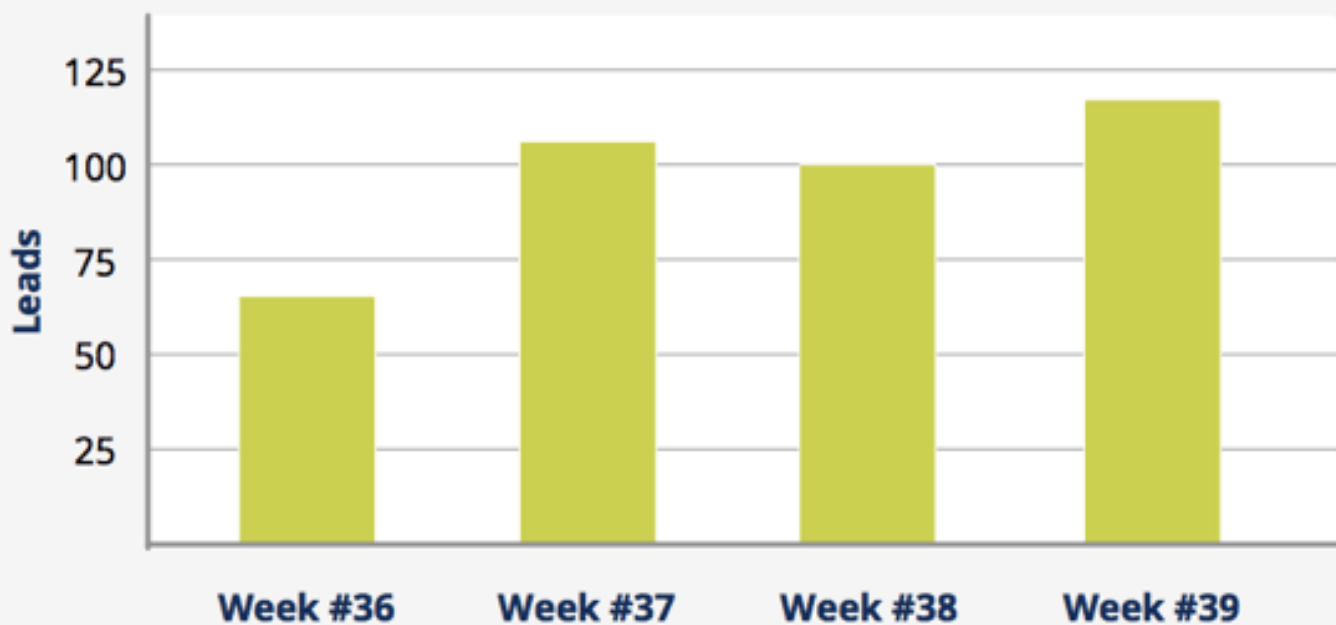
Most importantly, don't underestimate the value of a quick response, even if it isn't overly warm and fuzzy. The Internet is about immediacy. If you send your personal message two days later, you're two days late.

And technically, if you write the FiveStreet response, it's personal. You just didn't hit "send" right away.

FiveStreet responders are generated within five minutes. At the end of each day, import your FiveStreet list into a CRM (customer relationship manager) or email marketing tool of your choice.

There's real value to capturing your leads in a single net. Far too many agents spread their brand thin across multiple outreach channels and online listing tools. Each one has a different method of alert. Certainly some of your leads, if not many, get lost in the folds of a scattered Web presence.

FiveStreet Dashboard



[View Your Leads »](#)

[Download .CSV](#)

[Export to CRM](#)

FiveStreet is a marketing supplement, a middleman. You need to be proficient in online marketing to generate the leads it collects. You also need to be sure to act on them. FiveStreet provides you a contact's basics, and links to other avenues of customer information, like social media, if available.

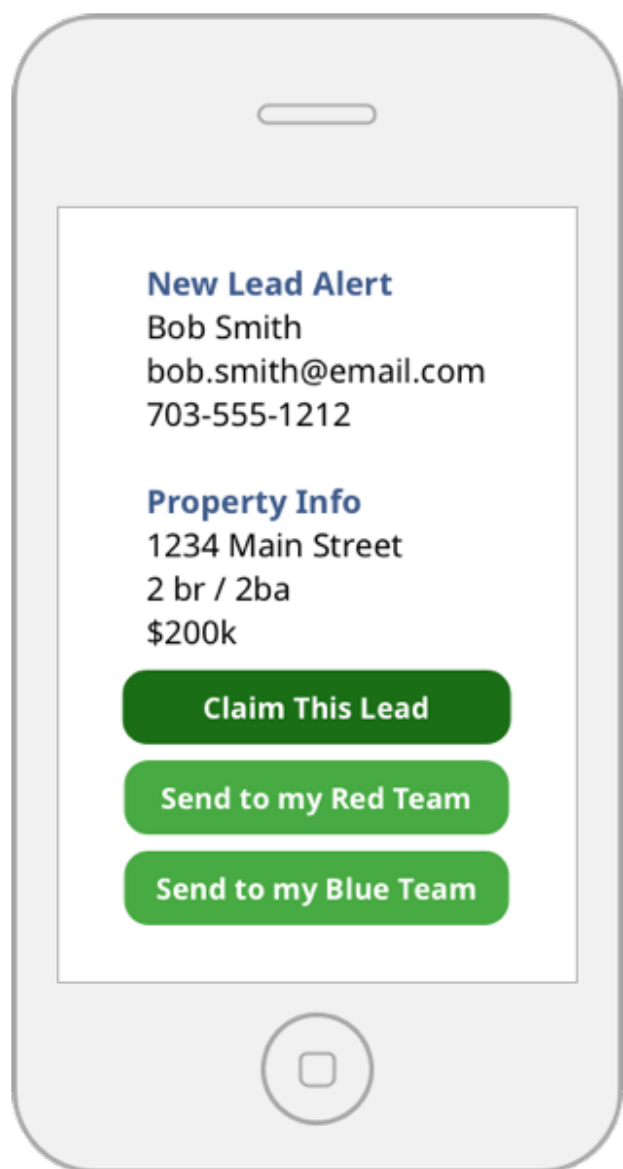
FiveStreet would be a great partner to **Charlie**, an aggregator of everything online about, well, everyone.

In terms of integration, FiveStreet doesn't kid around. It catches leads from more sources than I've heard of. Zillow. Trulia. BoomTown. Top Producer. Homes.com. Homesnap. Zurple. Realtor.com. And many more.

The odds are good it will connect with whatever tool you're using.

The autoresponders have notification parameters that prevent multiple messages in too short a time frame, or during off hours. Emails are sent at any time, while text messages are limited to just outside the business hours or your timezone, no later than 8 p.m.

When working in teams, you do have to create some internal rules about lead ownership with FiveStreet.



Because it delivers the leads it captures into a single pot, the agent who "claims" it can take the ball and run with it. However, that's a method sure to create some internal strife, especially if some agents spend more advertising online than others.

The software has the capability to allow for the distribution of leads by brokers to agent teams. I wonder, though, would a broker want to be this involved in assigning agent leads? Is it an updesk role? FiveStreet is affordable enough so individual agents can own accounts without the marketing support of the broker. That's how I envision users receiving the most value.

Without a sophisticated marketing staff, most agencies would find it too difficult to trace the lead's capture from initial website engagement all the way to conversion.

A potential homebuyer can interact with marketing content from six different agents within a firm's website before deciding to complete the Contact Us form. So who wins?

FiveStreet does let you trace from which lead source you get the most interest, a good metric to use in ongoing marketing budget decisions.

The close

If you're the type who puts their device face-up on the table during a lunch meeting, FiveStreet may be for you.

It's not overly complicated, and it's not trying to be something other than a temporary reservoir for leads captured online. I like it when software knows what it's good for and stops at that.

Now if you'll excuse me, I need to take this. ...

Do you use FiveStreet? What do you think? Leave a comment and let us know!

Do you have a product for our tech expert to review? Email Craig Rowe at craig@inman.com.



THE DAILY REAL ESTATE

TECH REVIEW:

VERTICAL RESPONSE

TECH REVIEWS, TECHNOLOGY

Vertical Response is a proven, effective email marketing tool

Design, send and respond to email marketing in one easy platform



by [Craig Rowe](#) on May 5, 2015

Have suggestions for products that you'd like to see reviewed by our real estate technology expert? Email Craig Rowe at craig@inman.com.

The pitch

No one should have to be convinced that email marketing is an effective way for real estate agents to communicate their brand to the market.

If it hasn't been productive for you, please understand: It's you.

However, it certainly helps to be using the right software.

Typically, the right email marketing software is a stand-alone product, not one embedded in a larger enterprise system or CRM (customer relationship manager).

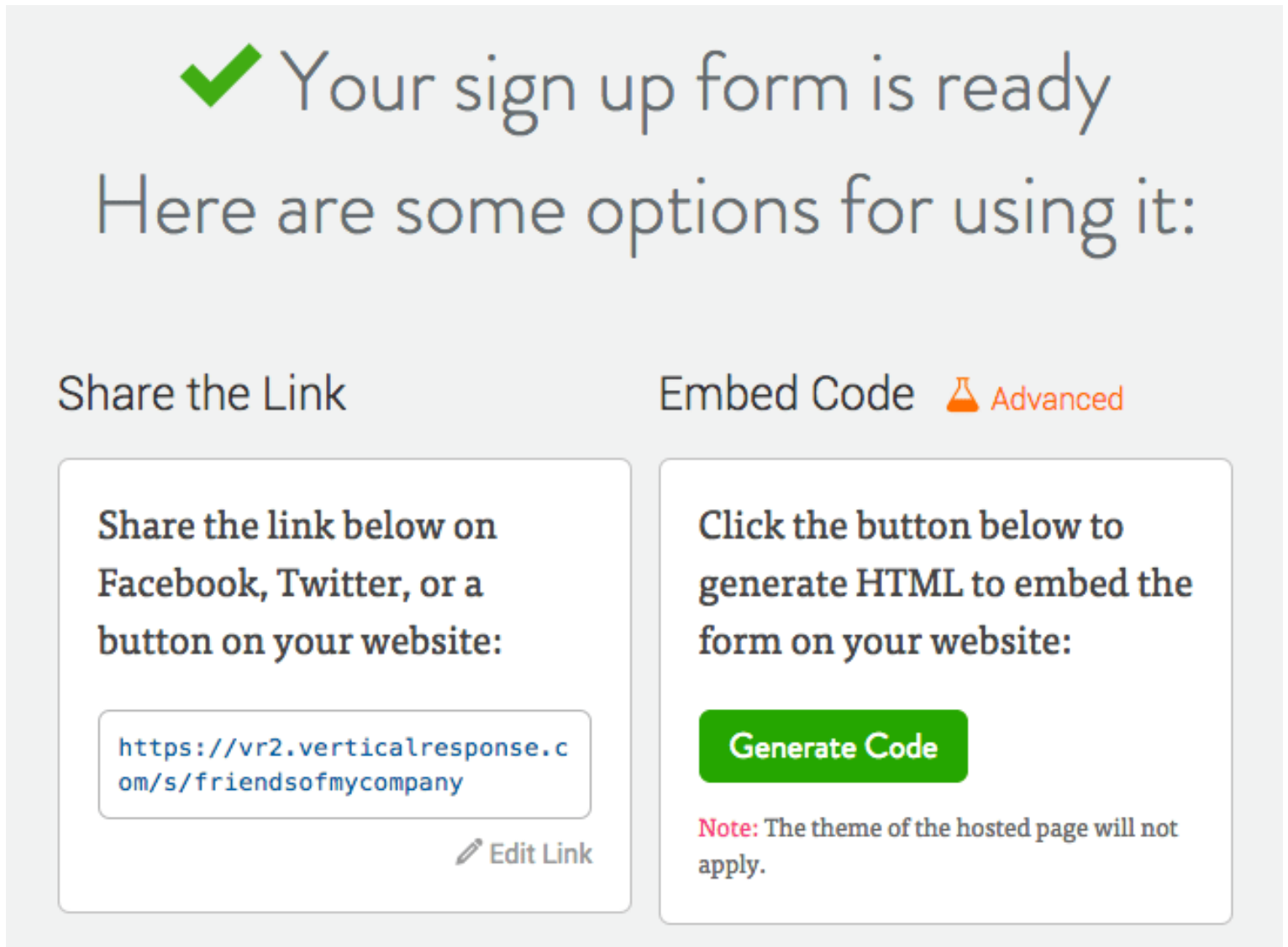
I often mention that I prefer software that has a single purpose. Larger systems can do a number of things well, like **REthink**, for example. But you wouldn't buy seats on REthink just to access its email marketing tools.

You could use **Vertical Response** for that.

The sale

Vertical Response has been around 15 years or so — quite a long time within the email marketing world.


During its inception, the business world trembled with anxiety about sharing email addresses, and the Can Spam Act was still two years out. So you can see how the company endured. This is an important context to include in your decision matrix when deciding on a marketing software partner.



✓ Your sign up form is ready


Here are some options for using it:

Share the Link

Embed Code  Advanced

Share the link below on Facebook, Twitter, or a button on your website:

<https://vr2.verticalresponse.com/s/friendsofmycompany>

 Edit Link

Click the button below to generate HTML to embed the form on your website:

[Generate Code](#)

Note: The theme of the hosted page will not apply.

The industry tenure of Vertical Response is clearly demonstrated as soon as you start building a message from one of its flexible, categorized templates.

You can choose to build a campaign for an invitation, maybe to an open house, or a “How to Buy a Home in 2015” class. The visuals are clean and contemporary, and all you have to do is type in your copy, upload a couple of photos and choose a contact list.


Vertical Response arranges its templates by theme or purpose. Themes are color- and layout-based, with a number of options within each selection. Purpose-based templates are for events, a “thank you” or general newsletters.

There are several options for adding contacts

You can use the following formats: .xls, .xlsx, .csv or .txt. Max size is 100MB.

Upload File 

Sign Up Form 

Add Manually 

There’s a category of templates called “Sale/Coupons” that is ideal for use in sending out a new listing. Large image fields, short text fields and a catchy color scheme. You can change the colors if you wish.

I also like that your design options aren’t so many that it delays the marketing effort, or allows you to create some heinous amalgamation of contrasting design trends.

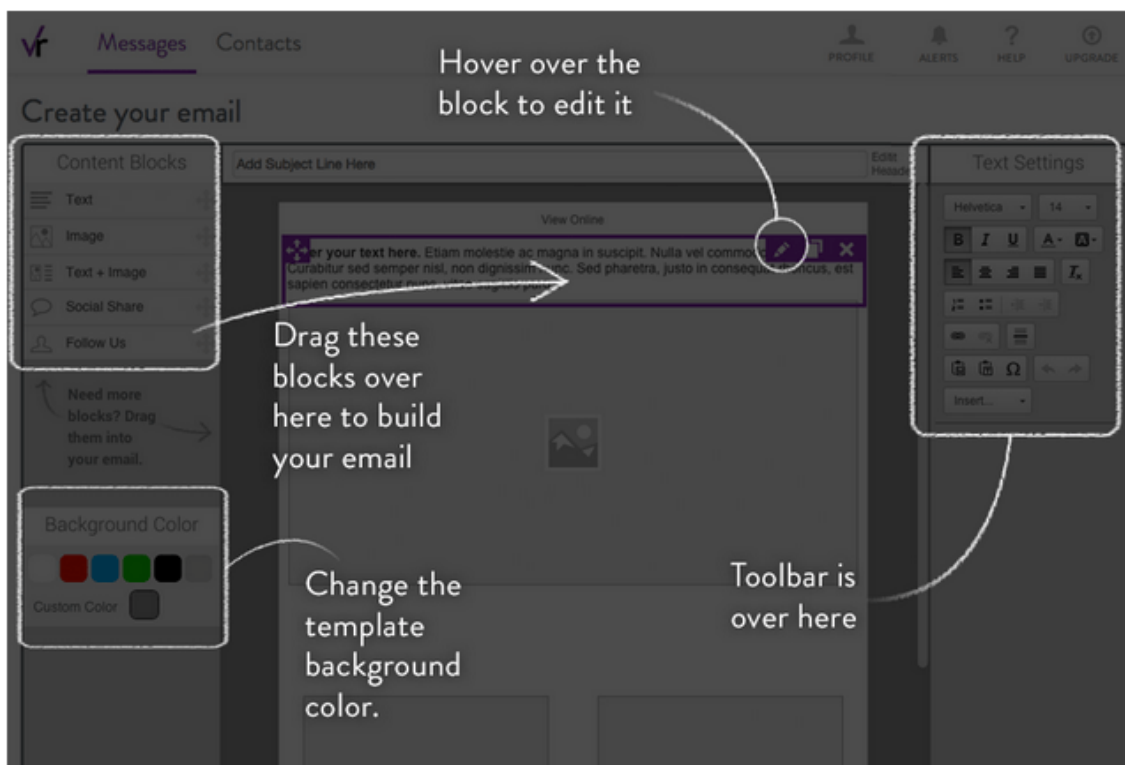
Ever tried to choose a WordPress template for a website? It can take weeks.

I don’t use Microsoft Word to write, but I do have to use it for other projects. I can’t stand that it doesn’t give me full, absolute power over my copy as I go. I have to stop to unbold something or remove some stylistic clutter it forces upon me. My inner Cormac McCarthy groans on the few occasions I need to use it to write fresh copy.

Vertical Response’s drag-and-drop text tools allow you granular control over your copy blocks. Use one box for an entire paragraph, or a separate one for every pertinent bit of verbiage. Easy stuff.

Email design is only one part of the equation. People to send it to is another matter altogether. Thankfully, Vertical Response makes this pretty easy, too.

If you have a list in a CRM, just output it to any number of file formats and upload it. Like most email clients, you can import .xls, .xlsx, .csv or .txt. You can also type them manually as you collect names at your open house.



Vertical Response includes a sign-up form design that provides you all kinds of visual options for lead capture. By simply checking a box, you can choose to include on your form only name and email address, or go bigger and ask for multiple phone numbers, company names, addresses and even marital status.

You want a contact database to be as consistent as possible. Make sure your sign-up form matches the field names in whatever list you output from your current database or CRM. A specific bit of functionality that I feel Vertical Response does well is allowing you to make custom autoresponders for different contact lists. Buyers and sellers have different motivations, as do single-family home investors and condo buyers. Use this feature to segment how you respond to each respective audience member after they sign up. It's a subtle marketing touch, but nonetheless demonstrates professionalism and control of your message.

The close

If you commit to it, at least once a month, email marketing is an excellent way to stay in front of clients and contacts. Your options for software in this arena are many. **MailChimp. Constant Contact. TinyLetter.**

I don't think any of them will hamper your marketing plan. But I do think Vertical Response makes the design process just a bit easier than the others. TinyLetter is a somewhat different tool because it doesn't stress vibrant design or direct sales. It's for short, direct messaging.

If you're looking to try a new tool or just getting your email marketing effort ramped up, Vertical Response should definitely be on your short list.



THE DAILY REAL ESTATE

TECH REVIEW:

POSTAPROP

TECH REVIEWS, TECHNOLOGY

Landing page tool postAprop is conceptually sound, visually flat

Squeeze pages and animations are not what they're cracked up to be



by [Craig Rowe](#) on May 6, 2015

Have suggestions for products that you'd like to see reviewed by our real estate technology expert? Email Craig Rowe at craig@inman.com.

The pitch

Marketing online is one part tradition, one part tech.

To craft an effective net to homebuyers and sellers, you need to have a compelling product supported by a strong message (traditional); and, you need to have the technical capability to deftly capture a website visitor's information (tech).

This is why you have "contact us" forms and give away free housing market reports. It's also why some of you block visitors from seeing listings unless they provide their contact information. (No wonder they go to Zillow.)

In short, winning a site browser's personal information is critical. However, some ways of getting it are better than others.

Maybe **postAprop.com** is one of the better ways.

Or maybe not.

The sale

PostAprop.com provides an extremely simple way for you to create landing pages for your website. However, the folks behind the site like the term "squeeze pages."

On the other hand, I despise the term "squeeze page," which stems from the fact that it squeezes the site user into giving you their email address. The term gives marketing a black eye; it sounds shady.

I can't help but relate the idea of squeeze pages to a shakedown, as if I'm in a noir film being gently pushed up against a wall by a guy in a low fedora with too many rings on his fingers.

"So a ... you want this free book on how to sell ya home? We're gonna need a li'l sumpin' first."

You shouldn't have to squeeze anyone to want to do business with you.

PostAprop pages can be stand-alone or subdomains of your site (howtosell.johnsonteamrealtors.com), and they offer free e-books or video content as the trade-off for the user's information.

Conceptually, the pages are sound. They have all the elements you need: a few quick bullet points, clear calls to action, and a promise to deliver on its promise. In other words, they aren't clickbait.

But, man, do they look like clickbait.

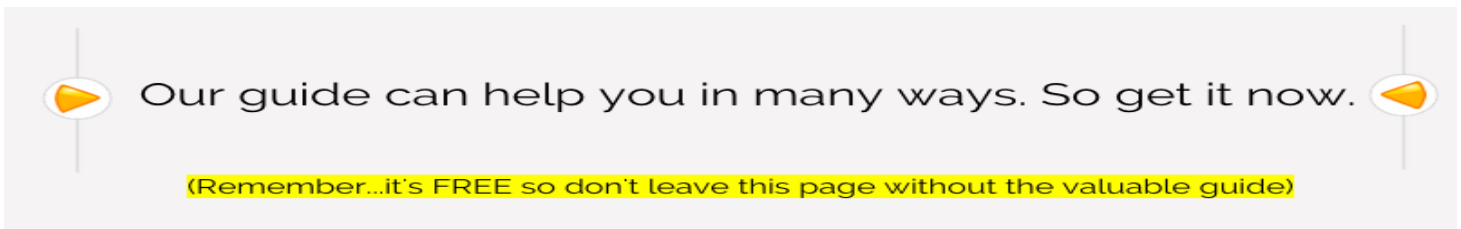


PostAprop's design acumen leaves me questioning its respect for Web design. I'm surprised there isn't a hit counter on the bottom of the pages it builds for you. I can't help but wonder if someone at the company has the title of "webmaster."

PostAprop videos use a series of stock animations, floating text and stock soundtracks. There's nothing original or creative about them.

Nevertheless, postAprop makes the creation of these pages as simple as possible. All the content is in place and provided for you. After a person submits their information, you can decide to which page of your website they are subsequently directed.

It takes only a few clicks to roll out a postAprop landing page. Users are not asked to download anything or attend training, just click a design and go. PostAprop has templates to pull in the email addresses of first-time buyers, people who want your new listing alerts, or maybe a guide on "How to Sell for More."



There's no doubt that the product delivers on its ease-of-use promise.

Bear with me: The concept of landing pages is proven, but postAprop's visual execution of it leaves a great deal to be desired.

I shouldn't have to be told by an online marketing product that I get "2015 Content on Every Page" for my \$19.97 per month. Plus, what does that even mean? Is it just an attempt to appear chronologically relevant? Will it incessantly misuse "literally"?

Moreover, in an age of real estate marketing that includes aerial drone footage and Matterport visuals, I would expect a "3-D Image" on my landing page to be more than a slightly shaded version of the non-3-D image.

People today are highly wary of flashing boxes and absurd headlines used to seize clicks on content-heavy sites.

Content that dramatically stands out from the visual cues around it is going to —rightly or not — fall victim to the snap-click judgements we make as time-pressed online consumers.

If your website was designed by a professional developed around compelling visual trends and supported by the latest metrics in online engagement, you don't need an abrupt shift in graphic appeal to grab an email address.

Good, original content and the promise to be an effective real estate agent should be all you need to earn a new lead.

A landing page has to reflect your current site's visual themes and tone to be considered an authentic extension of your product promise. I have a hard time seeing where PostAprop offers such design functionality.

Your detailed and accurate report will be prepared by realtor Barry Realtor.

Yes! I Want My Home Value Report >

PostAprop allows you to upload and offer your own content on its pages. I highly encourage all agents to be creating their own content for purposes just like this.

The close

PostAprop also includes in its accounts a one-page property website tool, property flier creation and email marketing services. The one-page property sites look good, and may alone be worth looking into PostAprop.

The ancillary services are included in your monthly fee, which is what scares me. From a development standpoint, I'd be wary of how much marketing can be offered at such a small price. Is true customization possible?

It bears repeating: landing pages with free content in exchange for personal information is a proven marketing tactic to accompany banner and paid search advertising.

Just make sure that if you're going to use them they don't make users question your credibility as a real estate agent.

Do you use PostAprop? What do you think? Leave a comment and let us know!

Do you have a product for our tech expert to review? Email Craig Rowe at craig@inman.com.



THE DAILY REAL ESTATE

TECH REVIEW:

HOUSEFAX

TECH REVIEWS, TECHNOLOGY

Housefax lets you know if your potential listing is near a fault, cheap gas and strong cell signals

Get the edge on the competition by researching a home's history



by [Craig Rowe](#) on May 7, 2015

Have suggestions for products that you'd like to see reviewed by our real estate technology expert? Email Craig Rowe at craig@inman.com.

The pitch

I used to travel with my dad to look at classic cars he wanted to buy. One of the first steps we always took was to verify a car's authenticity via the vehicle identification number.

Muscle cars were often altered slightly by the factory to make a version that was faster or somehow unique. These subtle changes often made the difference between a car being worth \$5,000 or \$50,000.

Rare, alternate models are easily impersonated by street-savvy car dealers. All it takes is the application of a fender badge or some pinstriping to make a Buick Skylark look like a GSX.

Naturally, we didn't have Carfax. We used yellowed factory guides to unravel the automotive histories of prospective investments, thick books marred with mechanic grease, chained to counters or weighed down under a four-barrel carb.

After the 2008 real estate crash, an era pockmarked by strategic defaults and grow-house squatters, agents should know all they can about the house they're about to list or help someone buy.

Well, now there's **Housefax** (<http://www.housefax.com>).

The sale

Housefax is exactly what you think it is: software that provides a report on the history of a house.

But only because of Carfax is it that easy to understand what it is Housefax provides. (That, folks, is called good branding.)

A Housefax starts with a breakdown of the ownership history and building permits. Homebuyers may want to know if the house was once a rental, or how long the seller has owned it. Or whether it sits on a fault line.

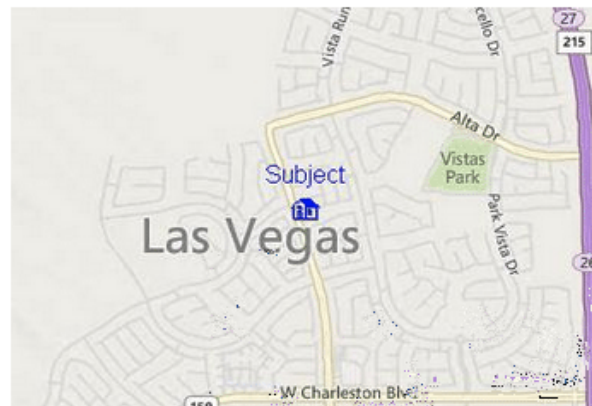


Earthquake Fault Proximity

Closest fault line 10 Miles

Earthquake Faults

—+— Fault Line



Housefax gleans the majority of its top-level data via public records. Sure, a homebuyer could easily do the same, but would they? And it's easy for you to do it outside of Housefax, too, but it's the data's role in the entire marketing scheme of things that creates value.

Housefax offers a clean rundown of a home's basic credentials, such as beds, baths, square footage and year built. It delves a bit deeper, too, listing roof surface, exterior construction type, lot size, parking, and porch and patio types. Every pertinent physical characteristic is here for you.



Property Incidents

This following list includes items typically included in various emergency response databases of possible incidents or events that may affect any particular property. The icons indicate the incidents/events that have been searched or where relevant activity has been reported as of the date of this report. Other incidents/events may not have been reported, or may have occurred since the effective date, or could occur in the future.

 **INCIDENT REPORTED**

 **NO INCIDENT REPORTED**

The transaction history is well-organized and easy to read. For example, I learned that the first owner of my house bought it new, for about twice what it's worth today. A couple of weeks later, a woman refinanced it for 30 years. (Interesting.) Seven months later, the original buyer got it back via quitclaim deed under an LLC, then lost it to foreclosure in 2008. Fascinating stuff.

In a time of commoditized, characterless home construction, it's good to know a home has some history.

Housefax also adds a few really nice touches to its home reports. Mine included a list of nearby fire stations and noted whether those stations are volunteer or staffed with career firemen.

1.56 mi	5 Miles <i>i</i>
Station: Las Vegas Fire Department Station 47 - Drive Service	
Staffing: Career	

3.27 mi	5 Miles <i>i</i>
Station: Las Vegas Fire Department Station 7 - Drive Service	
Staffing: Career	

4.98 mi	
Station: Las Vegas Fire Department Station 2 - Drive Service	
Staffing: Career	

Housefax also provides a list of the closest gas stations and the average per-gallon cost at the time of the report. San Francisco notwithstanding, homes subject to natural disaster are clearly prone to having their value affected.

Local Gas Prices		
Terrible Herbst	\$2.82 / Gal.	0.6 miles
Terrible Herbst	\$2.81 / Gal.	1.4 miles
Terrible Herbst	\$2.81 / Gal.	1.8 miles

Housefax lists nearby faults, flood plains, hail exposure index, and a list of recent environmental events, like floods, major storms and wildfires.

My report missed a rather recent forest fire that, according to the qualifications of the others listed, should be on the list. In fact, the fire in question, only two years ago, was at one point the highest-priority blaze in the nation. So there may be some thin cracks in Housefax's reporting foundation.

Everyone knows how important telecommunication services are becoming to the real estate market. If I can't get a DirectTV signal, and thus, no NFL Sunday Ticket? Next house, please.

Thus, a Housefax report includes major cellular network providers and the average respective strength of signal at the address.

Cell Service	
AT&T	6/6 Bars
Verizon	6/6 Bars
T-Mobile	6/6 Bars
Sprint	6/6 Bars

Agents can put away their list of local utility contacts because those also come with a Housefax report. Carbon monoxide incidents are on the Housefax list, as are a number of other reportable accidents, like gas leaks, mold remediation efforts and nonstructural fires.

I also found out in my Housefax report that our home has never been a meth lab; so there's that.

There's no question that Zillow's Zestimates are, for the most part, about as valuable as what's found underneath the home's welcome mat. A Housefax report could certainly aid in your efforts to determine a more realistic price prior to listing.



Meth Lab & Carbon Monoxide Reported Incidents

Illegal Meth Lab Activity

✓ NO ACTIVITY REPORTED

Locations reported to the U.S. Department of Justice by law enforcement agencies that found chemicals or other items that indicated the presence of either illegal meth drug laboratories or dumpsites.

Carbon Monoxide Incident

✓ NOT REPORTED

Carbon monoxide alarms should be installed in a central location outside each sleeping area and on every level of the home and in other locations where required by applicable laws, codes or standards.

The close

Housefax also offers five-year insurance claim history reports and preappraisals.

I think a home history report (<http://www.inman.com/2015/05/05/housefax-slashes-price-of-property-reports-amid-competition/>) is a very reasonable investment to bolster your marketing efforts. These reports look good, they're comprehensive, and they add some surprising value most agents don't think to consider when agreeing to list or help a buyer.

You don't have to present your Housefax report to your client; instead, use its content to better position yourself at the listing presentation. Every edge helps.

Especially if you're about to list a meth den.



THE DAILY REAL ESTATE

TECH REVIEW:

READYCHAT

TECH REVIEWS, TECHNOLOGY

ReadyChat is ready to talk about getting you more leads

Tool provides live person to interact on your website chat function



by [Craig Rowe](#) on May 8, 2015

Have suggestions for products that you'd like to see reviewed by our real estate technology expert? Email Craig Rowe at craig@inman.com.

The pitch

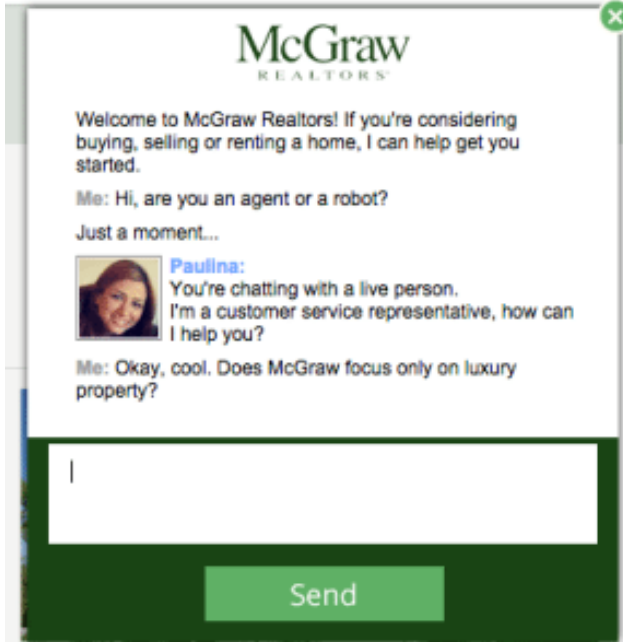
Chat tools are proven methods of online engagement and good forms of customer service. However, some are much better than others.

Some chat tools are automated, some are manned overseas, and some are handled by in-house interns or lower-level sales reps.

ReadyChat is a chat services provider that has a focus on real estate agent websites. Its service is managed by its own in-house teams who are trained in driving potential buyers and sellers into your contact databases. I thought there would be no better test than to see how well they did that.

The sale

I stopped by the website of **McGraw Realtors** in northeastern Oklahoma, a ReadyChat customer. The site looks nice, despite the keyword stuffing. The listing page is front loaded with multimillion-dollar listings. I saw the chat icon and got started:



start chat #

Welcome to McGraw Realtors! If you're considering buying, selling or renting a home, I can help get you started.

Me: Hi, are you an agent or a robot?

Paulina: You're chatting with a live person. I'm a customer service representative, how can I help you?

Me: OK, cool. Does McGraw focus only on luxury property?

Jeopardy theme ... (Note, this answer took a couple of minutes.)



Paulina: I can have a neighborhood specialist assist you with that. May I ask are you looking to buy a property?

Me: Poking around a bit, yeah. No need for a specialist just yet ... not sure of my time frame. Just curious given the listings on the front page if luxury is your focus. Or, if those are just others' listings fed from the MLS?

Paulina: If you would like to leave your requirements with us, I'll have an agent do the searching for you. Can you tell me how many bedrooms you are interested in?

Me: Probably 3 ... maybe a bonus ...

Paulina: Great. Is there is a price range you would like to stay within?

Me: \$500K

Paulina: And are you currently working with an agent to help you in your search?

Me: No, not yet.

Paulina: If you would like to leave me with your name, phone number and email address, I can have one of our neighborhood specialists provide you with listings that best match what you're looking for.

Me: Again, just trying to determine if you focus only on luxury property, the front-page listings indicate as much.

Paulina: I'm a customer service representative, but can have a licensed realtor assist you with your needs.

Me: That's OK... I'll keep poking around. Thanks for, well...

Paulina: Sure. Is there anything else you would like to mention at this point?

Me: Nothing now, back to work I suppose.

end chat #

The page numbers on McGraw's listing page suggest they have several thousand listings. All I wanted to know is if they focused only on luxury properties, and if all of those were their listings.

I knew the answer. And since I went into the chat to deliberately challenge my chat partner's close rate, I can't blame her for not being able to convert.

In order to dive deeper into the ReadyChat skunkworks, I decided, what better way than to have a little chat with one of their reps?

Below is the actual transcript from a chat I had with Alicia of ReadyChat on May 4, around 2:30 p.m.

start chat #

Alicia: Thank you for visiting ReadyChat. How can I help you today?

Me: Do you work only for real estate companies?

Alicia: Anything real estate related. May I ask what industry you're in?

Me: So, commercial, rental property management, etc.? I'm in real estate technology.

Alicia: Yes, we definitely cover those. Are you inquiring about becoming a reseller?

Me: No, just doing some analysis of chat tools. Not to put you on the spot ...

Alicia: No problem (smile emoticon) May I have your website URL for our reference?

Me: No emoticons please, we're not cave dwellers. Inman.com. How do you qualify leads? Just, a contact sent to an agent? Or, is it somehow quantified as being a "warm" lead?

Alicia: Our leads usually have double or even triple the conversion rate of regular Internet leads. This is based on independent studies. Therefore, it's safe to say our leads are warm. We send the contact information in addition to the entire chat transcript to the agent.

Me: Cool. I suppose if they're coming to the site and engaging with content (chat) they are more than just tire kickers. Nice. What kind of training to your chat reps have?

Alicia: Good customer service skills and a good understanding of real estate

Me: Gotcha. Is there a specific point in a conversation where they try hand off a chat to an actual agent?

Alicia: Yes, once we get their contact details. The agent will then take over where we left off.

Me: Ohhh, the agent takes over the actual chat?

Alicia: No, they take over by phone or email (whichever method they prefer).

Me: Right. How does your team know to which agent to send the lead? Or is it just forwarded to a general mailbox?

Alicia: It's predefined.

Me: By the customer/agency?

Alicia: Most brokerages have a CRM (customer relationship manager) as well, which routes it to the appropriate agent.

Me: Sweet, so you integrate with CRMs? Or is that on the agency's end?

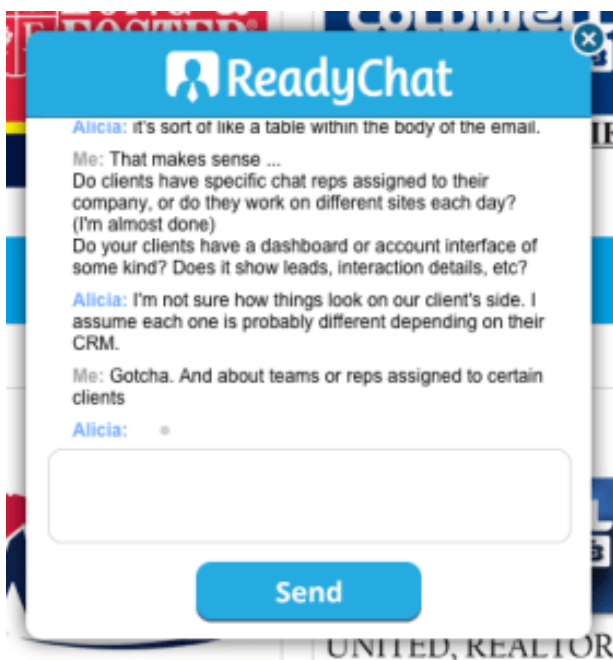
Alicia: I believe we can integrate with almost all real estate CRMs out there.

Me: OK, to what extent? Can a chat script be connected to a contact's record in a CRM? That sort of integration?

Alicia: The CRM takes only the contact details from the chat transcript.

Me: Oh right... wouldn't be worthwhile to have all the superfluous discourse. Do your chat teams use a form to enter in details or just in the body of an email?

Alicia: It's sort of like a table within the body of the email.



Me: That makes sense ... Do clients have specific chat reps assigned to their company, or do they work on different sites each day? (I'm almost done)

Do your clients have a dashboard or account interface of some kind? Does it show leads, interaction details, etc.?

Alicia: I'm not sure how things look on our clients' side. I assume each one is probably different depending on their CRM.

Me: Gotcha. And about teams or reps assigned to certain clients?

Alicia: From a technical standpoint, it's possible that specific agents would be assigned to specific clients, it would depend on the traffic of the website. I don't know if our operating officer has anything like that set up for any client.

Me: Last question ... there are a lot of chat tools out there. Can you list a couple of differentiators of ReadyChat?

Alicia: We're the only managed one. Not only that, we're the only real estate-managed one.

Me: Managed?

Alicia: We do the chatting for the agents. Agents are always on the go. They can't chat themselves 17 hours a day.

Me: Well, they could if someone would listen, I assure you. (Kidding, of course.) So most tools are manned by the actual users?

Alicia: The chat software is manned by our chat agents. May I ask your position within Inman?

Me: Technology review columnist; daily for Select members.

Alicia: Nice! May I have your name as well for our reference?

Me: Sure can: Craig Rowe. Thanks for your patience, and answering all of my questions.

Alicia: Of course. Not a problem.

Me: By the way, I've left Wendy hanging in the window over at Cressy Everett Real Estate ... better tell her I'm not interested in any real estate today.

Alicia: lol. Thanks, I will pass along your message.

Me: Thanks again Alicia. Happy chatting. And remember, no emoticons. Let's all make change together.

Alicia: Our clients love the emoticons lol

Me: That's not helping.

Alicia: It comes across friendly and increases conversion rate.

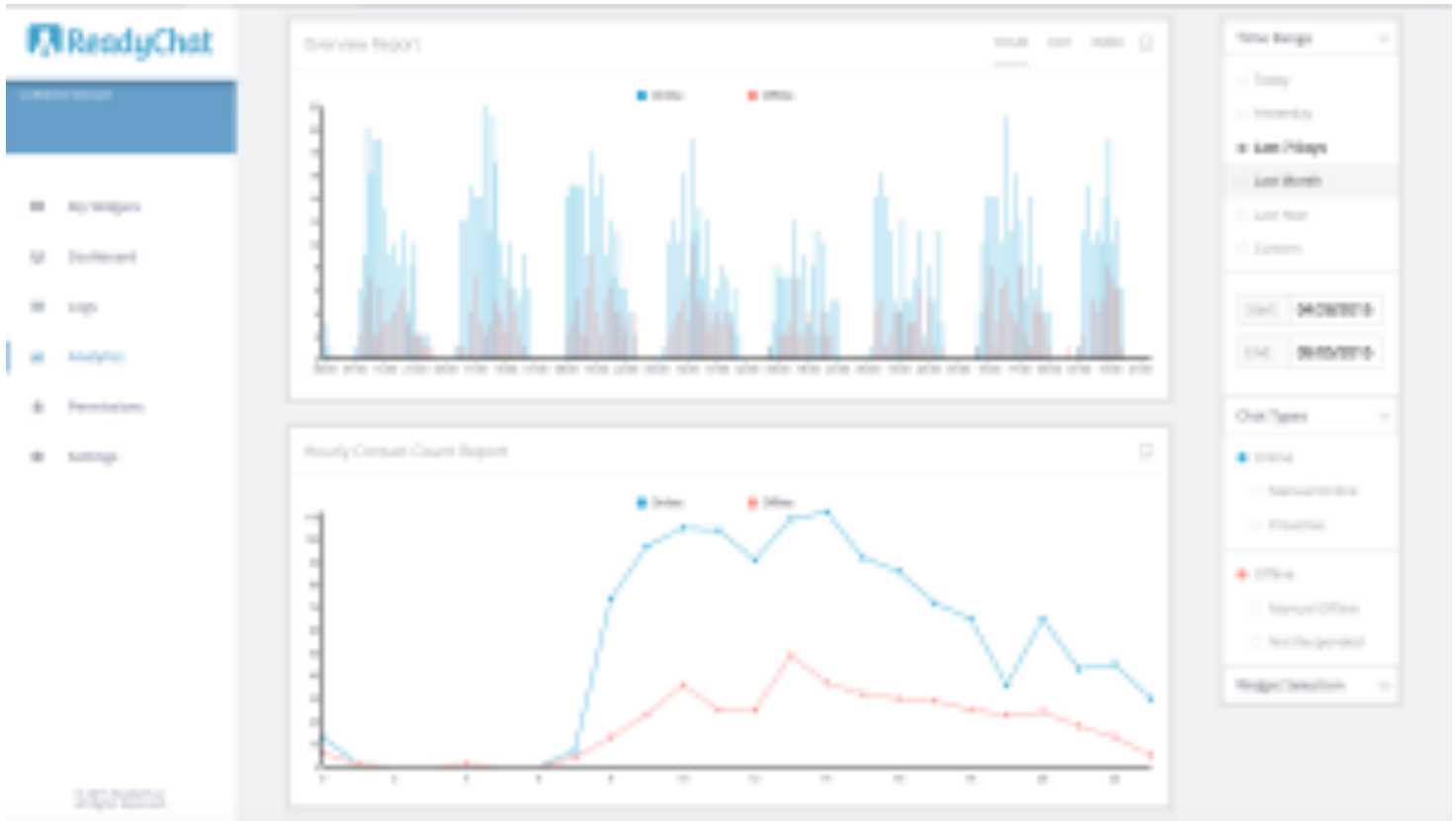
Me: That says so much ...

end chat #

The close

That's how ReadyChat works. More or less. Chat tools do increase the number of website visitors who become contacts. Turning them into clients is up to you. ReadyChat has some nice reporting capabilities for users to examine the efficacy of their chat team.

ReadyChat is focused on real estate, so that's a bonus among the many tools among its ilk throughout the greater business world. Plus, as Alicia stated, it's completely managed.



ReadyChat is priced per lead, starting at \$8 per lead, up to 250. Agencies aiming for 1,000 leads will spend \$5 per lead. This means the reps are motivated to convert, a structure real estate agents can relate to. Lastly, engagement tools like an active chat are much, much (endlessly, in fact) more effective than those auto-play talking-person-in-the-corner videos. Please, make that stop. It's 2015. It's no longer innovative.

Anyway, if you want to better engage with website visitors, give ReadyChat a call. Ask for Alicia.

Do you use ReadyChat? What do you think? Leave a comment and let us know!

Do you have a product for our tech expert to review? Email Craig Rowe at craig@inman.com.



THE DAILY REAL ESTATE

TECH REVIEW:

RELATEIQ

TECH REVIEW, TECHNOLOGY

RelateIQ is a sleek, smart and relationship-driven CRM

Conceptually rich software that's good at what it does



by [Craig Rowe](#) on May 11, 2015

Have suggestions for products that you'd like to see reviewed by our real estate technology expert? Email Craig Rowe at craig@inman.com.

The pitch

Choosing a CRM (customer relationship manager) is like choosing the right prom date when you don't already have a significant other. You want it to be fun, easy to work with, but not overly clingy.

You don't want to be forced to use it. You also want it to get along with systems you already know, and most of all, it's important that you don't carry a big financial burden.

Given that, I think **RelateIQ** might just be worthy of your corsage.

The sale

RelateIQ is relationship-driven, overseeing relationships among co-workers and relationships with customers.

In the RelateIQ vernacular, a “relationship” is an account (your buyer/seller) or a contact (a lead).

Organize Your Relationships

RelateIQ uses lists to give meaning to your relationships. Select a type of list that best fits your workflow.



Sales

Track leads and opportunities through your sales funnel



Business Development

Track deal status, deal ownership, and upcoming events



Fundraising

List investment amounts, current statuses, and recent activity



Custom

Start from scratch

RelateIQ is easy to get up and running. Its friendly, clean interface isn't at all intimidating, and its sleek autopopulation of contacts from either Gmail or Microsoft Exchange (Outlook) makes onboarding your database a snap. It also combs your calendars and social media accounts.

This kind of ease of use is a tremendous asset for a CRM. Just the term “CRM” connotes hours in front of webinars or maybe even classroom training sessions. No thanks.

RelateIQ may have a few short videos to watch, but the learning curve is minimal.

RelateIQ would work best for agents who work in teams, because relationships can be shared and the collaboration tools are robust. Team members can communicate with one another about a relationship and share all actions and intelligence related to that account.

Success! Ralph Cramden updated on Opportunities

Account



Ralph Cramden

Points of Contact



Craig
craig@inman.com



Brad Inman
brad@inman.com

View Opportunity

Delete Opportunity

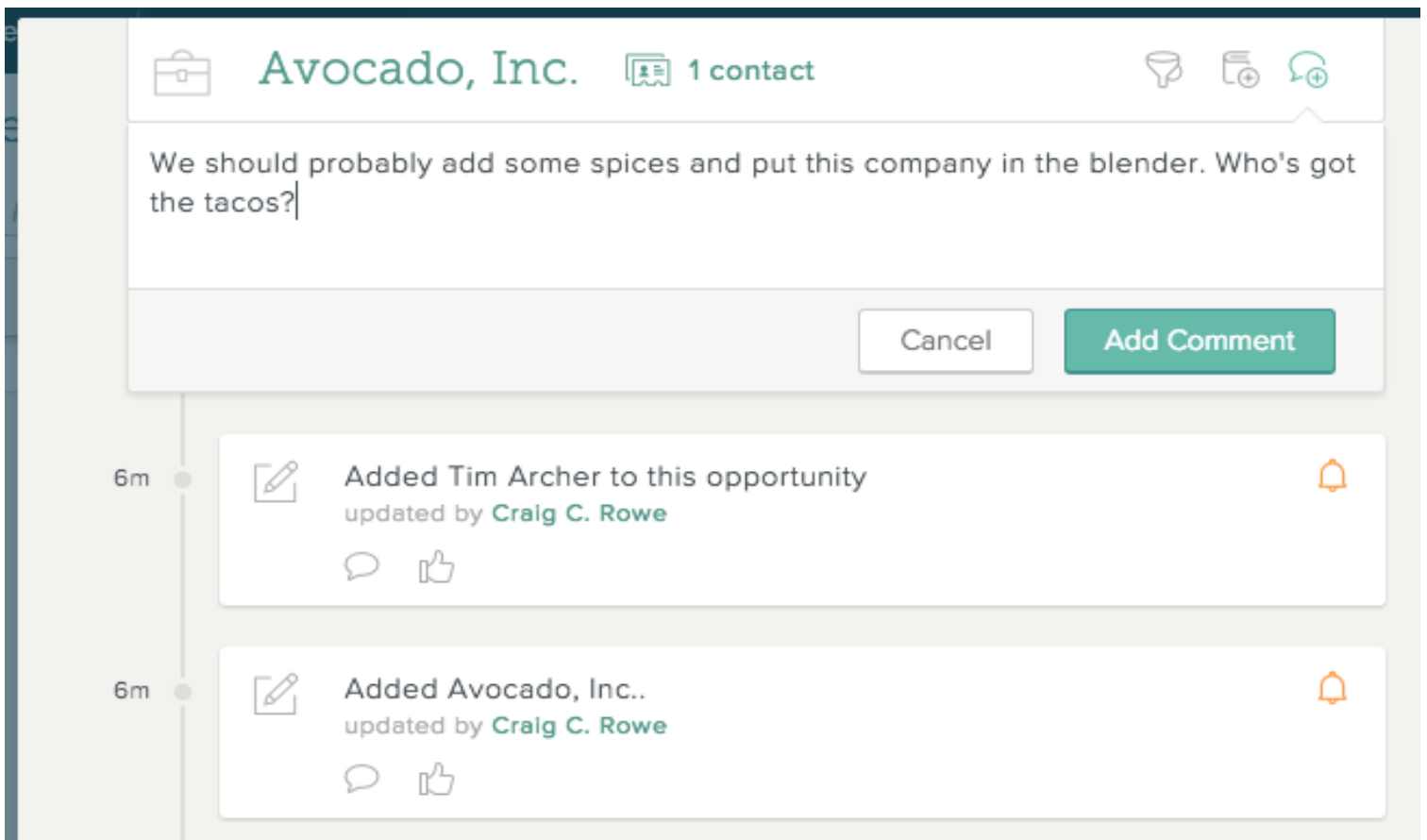
Setting up a team is pretty simple stuff and done right in the main dashboard. Once on a team, account information can be shared and interaction can get underway.

However, if you have a couple of accounts that are your own, you can easily hide that information from team members. When you establish a new relationship, RelateIQ will ask if you want to share it.

This may not be as crucial an issue in smaller offices, where unspoken professional pressure is enough to dissuade agents from interloping; but in more sizable offices where not every agent is familiar with one another, contact privacy is critical.

The software automatically parses contacts by organization and the account user. Organization contacts would be those familiar to your entire office, like home inspectors, mortgage brokers and attorneys. Your contacts remain private to you unless you decide to share as part of a sale.

Reaching out to a contact is as simple as clicking their name from within RelateIQ. You can type up your message and send it from within the system, which will then track when it was read and record the communication.

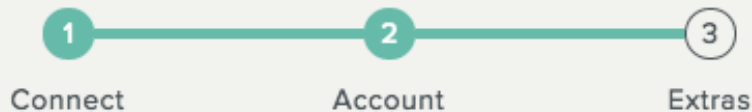


The product uses the term “list” to define workflows, or your transaction process. Lists are where most agents would focus if using RelateIQ.

It comes ready with a sales list template; you probably don’t have to do much to get going. You can rename it to “listings” if you like. You can also create a buyer list.

These lists, or workflows, are where your relationships will be centered. You track everything about your contacts or current sales using a well-organized and highly customizable "grid" interface. The grid shows you which relationships are shared or private, last time interacted with, team or contact owner, or even projected revenue.

Your Sharing Settings: Inman.com



Share Your Connection Strength

Identify untapped opportunities in your network. Help your teammates by sharing the strength of your connections with contacts in Inman.com's address book.

Share Your Connection Strength

Rosie A. Manager	
James McSales	

Other users in this organization will see the strength of your connections.

Visit any Contact or Account Profile to see your Closest Connections!

Continue

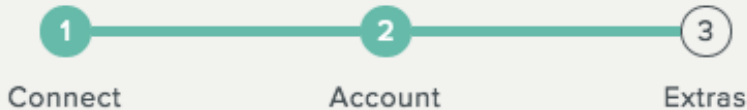
All grid fields are customizable. For example, in the status field, you can categorize buyer relationships as “6 months out,” “touring homes,” “offer submitted” or “in escrow.”

Fields can be added as you wish, and based on however you want to best track relationships.

RelateIQ users have the capability to delve into all of the communications, notes and updates on any relationship in which they have a role via the Stream view.

RelateIQ is probably best for larger agencies who work among teams. Top-level agents can quickly see how junior team members are controlling a transaction when emails, comments and notes about a sale are shared. One can also view if a contact hasn't been contacted in a few weeks, a good way to hold each other accountable.

Your Sharing Settings: Inman.com



Share Your Contacts

Add all current and future contacts from your address book to Inman.com's address book.

This will provide you with one clean address book for your entire organization. Your communication activity and content will remain private until you choose to share.

Share All Contacts



Connected Accounts: craig@copyandcontentgroup.com

Continue

Reminders to follow-up can be created either manually or by RelateIQ's "data science," which scrapes content directly from your contact interaction. Powerful stuff.

A couple of other highlights of RelateIQ include a Google Chrome extension for contact insights directly within Gmail, and its mobile functionality for both iOS and Android.

You can also connect RelateIQ to MailChimp's email marketing functionality or your HubSpot account.

The close

RelateIQ is conceptually rich software. It's a CRM I don't think most real estate companies will recognize.

It's not sterile or overly involved in defining "hot leads" or doing more than it should. In short, it manages relationships and the tasks, communications and business actions that enable us to maintain them. And it's good at doing all of that.

Agent teams who have shown success in getting the most out of their software investments would be smart to give RelateIQ a look. It's not designed for or by real estate agents, but it can work for them.

Do you use RelateIQ? What do you think? Leave a comment and let us know!

Do you have a product for our tech expert to review? Email Craig Rowe at craig@inman.com.



THE DAILY REAL ESTATE

TECH REVIEW:

ADWERX

TECH REVIEW, TECHNOLOGY

AdWerx delivers sophisticated online marketing tech in an easy, affordable solution

Get personalized online marketing that casts a wide online net



by [Craig Rowe](#) on May 12, 2015

Have suggestions for products that you'd like to see reviewed by our real estate technology expert? Email Craig Rowe at craig@inman.com.

The pitch

I don't believe agents need to be part of an MLS (multiple listing service) anymore to be successful.

In fact, I don't think it's at all unreasonable to say the entire concept of the MLS has long been eclipsed by the reach and consumer tracking power of the Internet.

But I get it. Maybe you hold some sort of nostalgia for the MLS; maybe you think millennials are suddenly going to disconnect, pick up a hardline phone, dial a number and simply confess that they have no idea where to turn for advice on real estate. Or maybe fax you a request to mail them a home brochure.

My point is, if you don't want to spend money contributing to the listing syndication war chest, maybe you should try **AdWerx**, an online advertising tool for real estate.

The sale

Online advertising can be a bit daunting to the uninitiated.

The Internet is huge; how do you know which websites will deliver your audience? What determines how much you have to spend? Or how do you design an ad?

Thankfully, AdWerx answers those questions for you — and just about any other concern you may have about stepping out into the marketing wilds of the Internets.

The company's ad building and placement tools enable you to promote specific listings, your company's brand or your need for new agents, if applicable. Naturally, most agents will want to invest in listings and branding, the former first.

AdWerx builds you an ad after you provide a listing address and then gives you simple editing options, like colors and logo placement. Setup time is very minimal, and you pay for ads as you go.

From there, it's ready to run on websites frequented by those whose online activity has indicated interest in a home, or moving, or maybe wanting a mortgage.

AdWerx leverages the concept of remarketing, perhaps the most powerful advantage online advertising has yet to gain.

Also called "retargeting," you probably experience this marketing tactic everyday without necessarily realizing it. In short, retargeted ads follow you around the web. If you left the "origination" site, where your interest was first recorded, an ad for the

site's product, or listing, will display on another site you visit with the intent of sending you back to where it started.

AdWerx is plugged into countless highly trafficked websites, meaning if a potential homebuyer in your targeted ZIP code is getting their unverified political news fix from HuffPo.com, they may also see an ad for your newest listing.

AdWerx can also place your ad in front of those who are poking around sites like Macrumors.com, Slate, Yelp and Wired, as well as a number of major sports sites like Yahoo Sports, NBCSports and SI.com.

Your ad can also appear on the major listing aggregators; however, AdWerx ads actually have current information. Best of all, an ad will have your name and number attached to your listing, not the credentials of spend-happy poachers.

Even though such affordable remarketing is a compelling argument for which to partner with AdWerx, I see the key selling point here as its overall simplicity. The company has made an advanced marketing technology very easy to deploy.

Winning over a client would be pretty easy when you sell them on where their home might appear on the Internet, especially when they receive an automated report of where, when and how their home's advertisement has performed.

Using those metrics, you can then test various examples of the ad. Maybe one picture or headline garnered more interest than another. These are the opportunities that online marketing made possible.

When an ad earns a click, AdWerx sends them to a predetermined page of your choosing. Naturally, you'll want to set up a landing page for the property with adata capture, or at least to the page on your site with the listing.

Pricing is straightforward, another advantage to an AdWerx plan. The shortest duration plan of a week will run an agent \$49. You can run an ad for up to five weeks for \$199.

Lastly, homebuyers and sellers like working with agents who are recognized. The right marketing sends a message of authority and market awareness. It suggests you're proven. There's no question ads on the right sights will only lend more credence to your message.

The close

When combined with a tool that makes it possible for even the most nontechnical agent to control, Internet display advertising may be more cost efficient than many of your current forms of outreach.

AdWerx offers custom pricing when engaged in longer-term relationships with larger brokerages. However, the small agency is the real winner here, granted the power to present small-town listings in the same online environments as the Berkshires and Sotheby's. Plus, with a new mobile solution on the way, AdWerx's value to small agency users will only grow more beneficial. Word is that the company will sell only five ad accounts per ZIP code. Stay tuned.

If you feel that you need a stronger marketing punch to follow your email outreach and website investments, AdWerx may just be the knockout blow you're looking for.

However, does anyone get knocked out anymore?

Do you use AdWerx? What do you think? Leave a comment and let us know!

Do you have a product for our tech expert to review? Email Craig Rowe at craig@inman.com.



TECH REVIEWS, TECHNOLOGY

Nimble will do more for your CRM than your CRM does for you

It won't take long to understand how much relationship data this tool brings to your business



by [Craig Rowe](#) on May 13, 2015

Have suggestions for products that you'd like to see reviewed by our real estate technology expert? Email Craig Rowe at craig@inman.com.

The pitch

We have many more relationships based on ones and zeros than we do on handshakes and hellos.

People even say, "Nice to meet you," via email when copied on a conversation or referral. As stilted a form of introduction as this is, it's nevertheless the way we work today. Digital relationships count, and they're driving sales.

Nimble is a digital relationship manager that was introduced a couple of years ago to help us manage our menagerie of digital friends and colleagues. Most importantly, it was designed to help us turn them into customers.

The sale

Nimble isn't a CRM in the traditional sense. Its intent is to empower your CRM and better enrich your understanding of who is in it.

Nimble consolidates the array of connections real estate agents have throughout their contact managers, CRMs, email addresses, social networks, etc., and automatically finds the instances where each contact and conversation overlap.

All of your relationships can be pulled into Nimble via relationships with Google Plus, Gmail, Outlook, Facebook, LinkedIn, Yahoo and even Skype.

When integrated and then layered into Nimble's intrinsic functionality, a user can quickly recognize just how much potential revenue exists within their many online relationships.

It's not always easy to keep up with previous listing clients or that one long-distance friend who has said for years they plan on relocating to your market. With Nimble tracking their social streams, you stand a much better chance of hearing about that friend's job search in your area, or that previous client's announcement about being downsized and needing to sell again.

(Nimble's Contact Record feature adds the power of conversation to what is typically a rather flat, clinical way to view and interact with the people in our professional sphere of influence. It's much more than addresses and contact numbers.

Sure, Nimble shows you when you last interacted with a potential buyer, but it also adds that buyer's last interactions with others. Nimble allows users to quickly sort relationships with tagging and custom search tools.

Nimble silos your relationships into a single Inbox, whether in Gmail or Outlook. And it's in this unification where Nimble really demonstrates its omnipotence.

Let's say you've earned a mention from a previous client, just in a social context. Anyone else tagged in that post or tweet can automatically have a "live profile" built by Nimble when you simply hover over their name.

You can save that profile quickly, sort it, and then act on it. Maybe a neighbor of your previous client indicated needing a bigger house. In a only a moment, Nimble can build for you a comprehensive data summary on that individual.

SalesForce users can enhance any contact record in the same fashion, as can users of Top Producer or **PropertyBase** or any other pre-existing contact management tool. Thus, individual agents in larger brokerages can use it embolden.

Nimble's Contact Widget brings the software's functionality to whatever tool you happen to be using. The interface is a sidebar that presents within your browser, regardless of what software you're using. Hover over a name, and Nimble slides to life.

The image shows a LinkedIn profile for Barbara Giamanco. The profile includes a profile picture, name, title 'Sales, Social Selling, Customer Experience Sales Influencer | 404-647-4925', location 'Greater Atlanta Area | Professional Training & Coaching', and current employer 'Social Centered Selling LLC, Talent Builders, Inc.'. The 'Posts' section shows three recent posts: 'The Social Selling Conundrum', 'Trust in Selling', and 'Dude, Its Not Going to Close'. The 'Background' section has a 'Summary' tab with text about her role as a speaker and trainer. On the right, the 'Live Profile' sidebar from Nimble is visible, showing a 'ADD TO NIMBLE' button, a 'Details' link, and sections for 'Related Companies' (Social Centered Selling LLC, Talent Builders, Inc.), 'Social Data' (Twitter profile @barbaragiamanco), and 'Influential Topics' (Marketing, Social Media, LinkedIn, Business, Sales).

You can view Signals, which are mentions of you; a Smart summary of the individual in question; and the Live Profile, which is a breakdown of their current, up-to-the-second online identity.

The screenshot shows the Salesforce interface for a lead named Ken Krogue. The top navigation bar includes tabs for Home, Chatter, Campaigns, Leads, Accounts, Contacts, Opportunities, Forecasts, Contracts, and Cases. The main content area displays the lead's name, photo, and social media links. A 'Lead Detail' section shows fields for Lead Owner, Name, Company, and Title. A right-hand sidebar shows a 'Profile' view with a bio, location, and related companies.

Field	Value
Lead Owner	Developer Investigation [Change]
Name	Ken Krogue
Company	InsideSales.com
Title	Founder of InsideSales.com Promoting the Inside Sales Industry #1 Blog on Inside

Nimble users can then manage and assign tasks, build calendars, create events and in general, oversee an array of sales-oriented activities involving your relationships.

However, I don't envision the ultimate value of Nimble being found in its productivity features, even though they are well-done. For real estate agents, the proposition is the immediate and more thorough knowledge of not only your current relationships, but their current relationships as well. Nimble's reach and always-on presence are very impressive.

The close

There's little not to like about Nimble. It's mobile, it's operating system-wide, and it's affordable.

Nimble is part CRM, part private investigator.

Granted, while Nimble's programming and capabilities are widely applicable to real estate, this is going to be best for the highly active, tech- and social-savvy real estate agent. If your sales business is built on country club dinners and an old-boys network, Nimble is too much for you.

Agents wanting to always be in the know about who, when, and why a person is doing and saying what they're doing and saying, Nimble's contextual, relationship augementer should be right up your fairway.

It won't take long to understand just how much relationship data Nimble brings to the desktop, or mobile device.

Do you use Nimble? What do you think? Leave a comment and let us know!

Do you have a product for our tech expert to review? Email Craig Rowe at craig@inman.com.



THE DAILY REAL ESTATE

TECH REVIEW:

PORTABLE BACKUP DRIVES

TECH REVIEWS, TECHNOLOGY

Curb your fear of data loss with one of these portable backup drives

Back up the lifeblood of your business -- your contacts



by [Craig Rowe](#) on May 18, 2015

Have suggestions for products that you'd like to see reviewed by our real estate technology expert? Email Craig Rowe at craig@inman.com.

The pitch

I noticed in the comments below our **Special Report Survey on CRMs** that a few readers seem concerned about their data being stored in the cloud.

There's nothing wrong with wanting to be sure that your data remains your data, and whether through hacking or some dubiously worded line of text in a user agreement, your database doesn't fall into someone else's possession.

Also, let's not pretend those holding technological sway in the real estate industry boast of having any more than a shred of respect for who owns what information. It's all for sale, right?

Yet, sometimes we're our own worst enemies when it comes to protecting prospect data. We lose mobile phones. Forget laptops in the airport. And leave Salesforce open while we stand in line for another latte.

Maybe it's time you consider regular backups of your data.

The sale

External storage devices are everywhere. Trade show vendors hand out logo-emblazoned USB drives like Jolly Ranchers while SD cards of various capacities, scattered in drawers and pinched in office chair cushions, hold albums worth of property photos and listing presentations.

When it comes to your contact database, and the months of transaction documentation, emails, pictures, notes, events, and marketing materials on which your family's well-being is based, it's probably worth investing in a mode of backup not as easily brushed off as disposable.

Maybe one of these devices can help.



Seagate Backup Plus Fast Portable Drive

Export every contact record you have, then export every contact they have, and you still won't dent the capacity of this virtual warehouse. The Seagate Backup Plus comes with up to 4 terabytes of emptiness that you won't fill until your retirement party and a fast USB 3.0 connection. Mac and Windows users alike will be able to connect and move files easily using the built-in software. Even though it says "portable," this isn't something you should carry around in your purse or carry-all (male purse); instead, the point is to have your backup data secure in one place, one on drive.

Western Digital Elements Portable

Simple and quick define this base level backup buddy from the storage industry stalwart Western Digital. It comes formatted for Windows but can be reformatted for Mac users. This drive is fixed with USB 3.0 connectivity and is backward compatible with 2.0 ports. There are a number of storage capacity options in this line of drives and should you want it, it also comes with a trial version of WD's SmartWare Pro backup management software. I would just drag over the files you need copied once.





Verbatim Acclaim

Here's one that has some flair. The Acclaim comes in a bunch of vibrant colors, so if having something heavy and colorful on your desk is important, maybe this option is for you. The Acclaim is about the size of an iPhone 6 and knows no USB connectivity limitations, which is another advantage. It comes with the company's Nero BackItUp & Burn essentials application for regulating your backups.

Toshiba Canvio Connect Portable HDD

This tiny drive also comes in cool colors with a number of volume options up to 3 TB. Not much larger than the palm of your hand, the Canvio is USB 2.0 and 3.0 ready and doesn't need to be reformatted between Mac and PC connections because the Mac drivers are built in. It can go from device to device without hassle or setup. Toshiba sends along some Windows only cloud storage, too.



The close

You should be backing up your business content at least once a week; for example, your presentations, contacts, documents, flyers, videos, pictures and anything else that you created to help your clients.

Everything you do from listing to close for every sale and buyer represents business intelligence, and its value grows ever more critical in today's rapid-share, easily-duplicated online business environment. Even if you use cloud sources like Google Drive, Box.net or Apple's Time Capsule, a physical backup is well worth the few minutes every week.

Any CRM worth its weight in email addresses has a record export feature. Use it to get all of your content in one place, on one drive, then store that drive somewhere cool, dry and safe.

Do you use one of these data backup products? What do you think? Leave a comment and let us know! Do you have a product for our tech expert to review? Email Craig Rowe at craig@inman.com.



THE DAILY REAL ESTATE

TECH REVIEW:

PHOTOGRAPHY APPS

MARKETING, TECH REVIEWS, TECHNOLOGY

Smile! These photography apps should help your next listing shine

They'll trump any Instagram filter any day of the week



by [Craig Rowe](#) on May 19, 2015

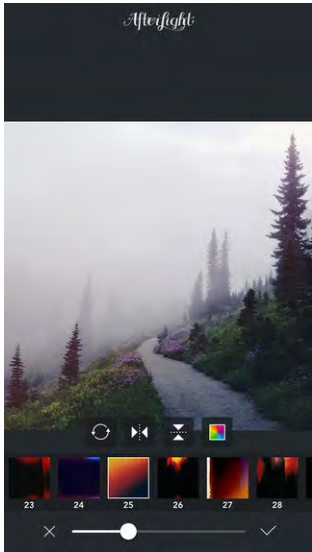
The pitch

Unless you are a full-time professional photographer, you're not as good a picture-taker as your Facebook" friends say you are. Put down that glass of #humblebrag; anyone can make a sandy beach look inviting."

Unfortunately, as a real estate agent it's pretty important that you understand at least what makes up a decent" photo. Like composition. Lighting. Color. Distance.

Instagram came around, and suddenly everyone thought they were the next Ansel Adams, filtering foyers and" master baths with as much subtlety as a Jackson Pollock painting.

Our smartphones are truly great cameras, and they're all you need to adequately capture the details of most homes. While there's no replacing the eye of a true professional when the listing has to shine, maybe a few of these apps can add some polish to your next listing promotion.



The sale

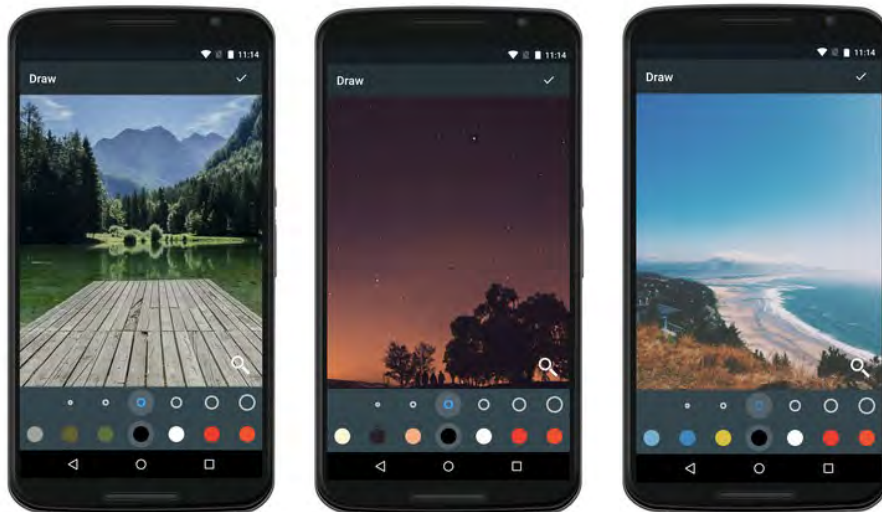
Afterlight

It's powerful and not free, but also a favorite for its simplicity to do great things with your iPhone and Android shots. You don't always have the option of shooting a house during the magic hours (just after dawn, just before dusk), but **Afterlight** can help you adjust exposure from brutal midday sun or tone down the contrast from the gleaming garage door.

You have plenty of ways to play with photos in Afterlight, too. (Many in-app options cost extra.) For example, you can output it to a postcard, and through a partnership with Sincerely.com, mail a card directly from the interface. That would be a nice little marketing play, huh?

Aviary

An Adobe product, **Aviary** lets you very accurately dial in the degree to which you can fix things like sharpness and exposure. You can scroll through your camera roll photos and choose which ones to edit or add some promotional text, which I think can be effective if you share your clients' listings on various social media platforms.



The focus feature is nice when you want to draw the eyes of potential buyers to a specific feature, like a bay window or chandelier. There are also plenty of effects that, if used right, will improve the photo, not overedit it. The interface is really cool and inspirational by itself. Aviary is free and plenty powerful, and Adobe's influence is obvious.

improved and
new tools



Snapseed

Snapseed, a Google app, was recently renovated after years of being a beloved photography app. But if you weren't a previous user, it's all new to you, and it's all really sharp. Pros are big fans, but agents will find it plenty usable to improve what you do for clients.

You can slide your finger within each edit function to apply improvements and touch-ups, and its features don't get in the way so you can see the photo uncluttered when its time to approve it. However, Snapseed has a multi-undo function called Stacks that tracks each edit you make as you go. Tap it to see each step along the way. Slick for an app. Snapseed is free, and worth some real estate on your device.

Autodesk Pixlr

Pixlr combines a number of cool features from other apps into its popular free app. You can apply focus changes after the shot, overlay text and graphics, and create slick little collages for immediate marketing use. It has one-touch image correcting feature that will address bad lighting and poor contrast, for example.

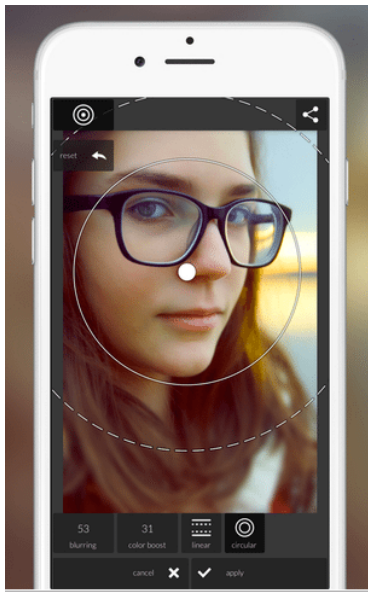
The basics are here, too, like crop and rotate and a set of predetermined photo dimension choices.

The close

You may be surprised at just how important good photography is to your listing. It probably impacts a listing's level of interest much more than most agents realize. I can't recommend enough the importance of professional photography for higher-end listings. The speed at which potential buyers scroll through Tinder apps and social media posts of properties demands that you do something to make the visuals of your listings stand out.

These apps may not increase your annual take-home, but if used right, they won't hurt it.

If you take anything away from this column, please let it be this: Your phone can take pictures horizontally, too.





THE DAILY REAL ESTATE

TECH REVIEW:

LEADPAGES

TECH REVIEW, TECHNOLOGY

LeadPages offers affordable websites that generate a ton more leads

Website tool has key features you need to build your digital presence



by [Craig Rowe](#) on May 20, 2015

Have suggestions for products that you'd like to see reviewed by our real estate technology expert? Email Craig Rowe at craig@inman.com.

The pitch

It doesn't cost much to build a decent website.

"Decent" being the operative word.

The problem with many low-cost website solutions is that they fool you into thinking having a website doesn't cost much.

If you're satisfied with a shrine to your Sears portrait and enough room to explain all those vague acronyms you list on your business card, then no, I guess they don't cost much. Unfortunately, what you may not realize about your website is that the less you spend on it, the more expensive it becomes.

If you want a site that perpetuates your brand as an agent, attracts leads, shares quality content and showcases listings, you need to spend more on it, or at least spend more marketing it. That way, it will cost you less.

Confused? Maybe **LeadPages.net** can clear things up.

The sale

Every website should be designed to dangle subtle carrots of content that lead visitors to a call to action.

Agents, your reward is the submission of contact information, or maybe a current home address. Every time you lose this unspoken game of carnival barker showmanship, your website becomes that much more expensive.

Thankfully, LeadPages' product line is constantly evolving to provide an array of browser- and mobile-based products to get visitors to click, sign up and register —exactly what you need to keep the silo of leads from emptying before the end of the third quarter.

First, the page templates look contemporary and visually appealing. It's easy to edit a page of your choice so it blends with brand and incorporates your site's tonality.

LeadPages categorizes its templates, so getting underway is relatively simple.

Pages focus on selling, pushing videos, grabbing email addresses, thanking people and event promotions, among other intentions.

A mini-site is an ideal solution to showcase a listing, while an event page can advertise an open house or a buyer education class.

Editing pages is easy stuff: Click and type, drag and drop, upload, link or embed. Installing a new app is probably more complicated than customizing one of these pages.

You can copy the URL of a current Web page on your site, even another landing page, and LeadPages will turn it into a customizable template for your library.

FREE WEBINAR

This Thursday
12PM Pacific
3PM Eastern

This Friday
11AM Pacific
2PM Eastern

TIM PAIGE
LeadPages

The 4 Most Important Pages In Your Business That Can Triple Your Conversions

REGISTER FOR THURSDAY'S WEBINAR

REGISTER FOR FRIDAY'S WEBINAR

Simply attach a LeadPages-generated text number to an ad, video, radio commercial, yard sign or mailer, come up with a property feature to highlight, and LeadDigits asks for an email address from the sender to confirm their interest in receiving information.

Advertise for prospects to text “New Home” or “Patio Pics” and after they do, an email address prompt is returned to them in exchange for the content.

Text-based email capture works for the same reasons texting in general has exploded as a communication method: It’s noncommitting.

Texting doesn’t invest us in the personal emotions of our conversations, nor does it invest an interested party in committing to a showing or agency agreement in order to see pictures of that cool downtown condo. Nevertheless, you now have their contact information. (In case you’re wondering, emojis are so popular because in most cases, texting doesn’t inherently include the context of emotion.)

You know those irritating pop-up windows that materialize when you show up or are about to leave a site? As brazen as they may be, those in-your-face efforts are pretty effective. LeadPages calls them LeadBoxes, cleverly enough.

You can use LeadBoxes to push visitors to register an email address or come to an open house at your office. Whatever the content draw, this kind of online display has proven to help keep them interested.

Agencies entrenched with Salesforce will be happy to know that at the highest level of account, LeadPages can drive captured leads straight to your database.

13421 Hennepin Ave, Minneapolis – \$180,000

Home Sweet Home! Newly remodeled kitchen w/ custom cabinets, new countertops & stainless steel appliances. Custom built-ins, open floor plan, refinished hardwood floors, freshly painted, with a finished lower level. Located just steps away from restaurants and shops, easy **urban living at its best**. Must See!

Next Open House in:

24 : **8** : **10** : **59**
DAYS : HOURS : MINUTES : SECONDS

REQUEST A SHOWING



Other account levels will connect with MailChimp, iContact, Constant Contact and HubSpot, among others.

I like that LeadPages uses these connections to help you segment your list at the call-to-action level. Since you may be targeting different budget buyers with different landing pages or LeadBoxes, simply connect each ad with the appropriate segment within your email provider.

This feature helps you minimize manual intervention in your contact database. And remember, segmentation in real estate list management is crucial; don't send your first-time homebuyers a list of vacation homes you have listed.

The close

LeadPages does a lot, especially if you can swing the highest account level. Even if you can't, the marketing sophistication offered at even at the \$25 per month level is worth considering.

Surf the Earth



Surf the Earth

Golf Course and Resort Owners Information

CLICK HERE TO LEARN MORE

Overall, LeadPages is well-designed and driven by users. They share marketing best practices, and there are tutorials and plenty of support should you need it. There are a number of other useful facets, like conversion rate tracking, A/B testing, 404 Page designs, and an array of administrative page management tools.

Agents who want to ensure their site is the centerpiece of their marketing effort would be wise to invest in more ways to get eyes on it.

Or you could always just earn another three-letter industry certification for your email signature.

That always pulls in the listing.



THE DAILY REAL ESTATE

TECH REVIEW:

HOUSELENS

TECH REVIEW, TECHNOLOGY

Not an app or website, HouseLens is a video production company — and you should hire them

As videos become more prevalent, you might need pros you can trust with your listings



by [Craig Rowe](#) on May 21, 2015

Have suggestions for products that you'd like to see reviewed by our real estate technology expert? Email Craig Rowe at craig@inman.com.

The pitch

Wall Street analysts having been fretting a bit lately about GoPro's stock price. The concern isn't about the action camera's quality, company management or some esoteric economic situation in a country that manufactures a chip of some kind.

Wall Street is worried about GoPro because getting footage from the camera to computer screens apparently isn't as easy as filming a double backflip gap huck on a snowboard.

The point is, just having a high-tech camera in a small package isn't enough to satisfy stockholders. You have to have actual footage. And it has to reach the 'Net.

Even buttoned-up stock analysts know that video is what sells the GoPro, and that online video is a proven money maker. So why aren't more real estate agents using it?

The sale

HouseLens is a video production company focused on real estate. They don't have an app or a Web-based editor. They just make really nice videos for homes, agents and brokerages.

I had to give the idea of reviewing the company considerable thought because just how much "tech" am I reviewing?

I've reviewed companies in this milieu before, like EzFlix and Studeo, but they had custom software. However, the purpose of each company is to provide agents with professional, marketable and Web-worthy marketing collateral. Held against that backdrop, HouseLens is as good it gets.

Sure, you're not shooting the footage with your phone or tapping together images for a slideshow, but you are receiving a compelling, powerful way to sell a home. So that's why I'm telling you about HouseLens.

The company can do a number of video projects for you, but focuses heavily on listing walk-throughs. If I were hiring them, I'd hold their hot shoe to the fire when it comes to the music, because the stock library they license rights to is way too stock.

Outside of the dental office soundtracks, it's clear that they're shooting on Steadicams, or some iteration of one. In case you're curious, that's what makes the walk-through look like a float-through. They take good angles on each room, make sure the most compelling features make the frame and even use nice establishing exteriors to really sell the "walk-up" impact that sellers need to earn an offer.

Video portability is made very easy today, and it helps give video an exceptional marketing shelf life. A listing video can be by itself on YouTube or Vimeo, integrated with one-page listing sites and shared on other social media channels.

However, HouseLens has taken a proactive step in helping you share video content by partnering with Emma, a growing email marketing provider with a heavy bias toward mobile content readers.

The relationship provides specialized pricing, as well as quick access to your HouseLens videos that are formatted for email sharing. It's a smart way for the company to ensure you get your content viewed (take a hint, GoPro) and an even smarter decision by you to share it. HouseLens also offers video for individual agent bios and longer commercials to offer insight into your office.

You could also choose to engage HouseLens for its 3-D tours via Matterport technology. My opinion is these sweeping home visuals simply don't offer the impact of actual video. They look cool and are fun for about 45 seconds until you realize it's more nefarious than informative to steer a virtual camera around someone's master bedroom. To each his own.

HouseLens clearly employs an experienced media production team. From photographers to editors, the samples I've seen are top-notch. And for what it's worth, I've worked in television and film production; I have a decent grasp of what constitutes a watchable, worthwhile story.

Creative agents could engage HouseLens to capture company events, customer testimonials, how-to videos, monthly video market reports and a host of well-done, shareable marketing content. Your options are many.

HouseLens also provides HDR (high dynamic range) photography services. High dynamic range is a camera advancement that enables the capture of a greater depth of light range, meaning the brights are brighter and darks darker, and very fine details are revealed. You might think an HDR photo has had some sort of filter applied.

The close

I find it funny that on a customer testimonial video for HouseLens, the participants describe it as "full motion video" and "virtual home tours." Let's cease the Web-catchy euphemisms and call it what it is: a video of a house.

I suppose the buzzwords serve only to make the buying decision more palatable to those who would rather invest in "Internet Content Marketing" than professional video. Regardless of what you call it, when done with creativity and skill, and shared within the greater context of marketing a listing, video is very effective and highly flexible. And HouseLens does a great job making them.



THE DAILY REAL ESTATE

TECH REVIEW:

FALCON

SOCIAL MEDIA, TECH REVIEWS, TECHNOLOGY

Falcon flies in from Copenhagen to offer another way to manage social marketing

A clean interface and intuitive categorization help this software fly high



by [Craig Rowe](#) on May 22, 2015

Have suggestions for products that you'd like to see reviewed by our real estate technology expert? Email Craig Rowe at craig@inman.com.

The pitch

Managing social media can be a plate-spinning-on-roller-skates experience. Either you have expertise in that particular act of the marketing circus, or the people are laughing at you, not with you.

Just hitting the “share” button a couple of times a day is probably not enough for you to earn an actually interested, devoted fanbase. Understandably, though, that’s where many agents end up. It’s just the nature of the biz; current clients come before future clients.

Teams and agencies with marketing staff know there are better ways to get shares and earn contact information. They also know it takes use of some type of social media management tool, like **Falcon Social**.

The sale

The social mediasphere is a loud place. There are different message styles, content options, colors, views, ads and an endless soiree of soundbites striving for the same goal: our attention.

Therefore, putting that entire party into a small, orderly venue is no easy feat. Yet, Falcon has managed to do a pretty darn good job of it.

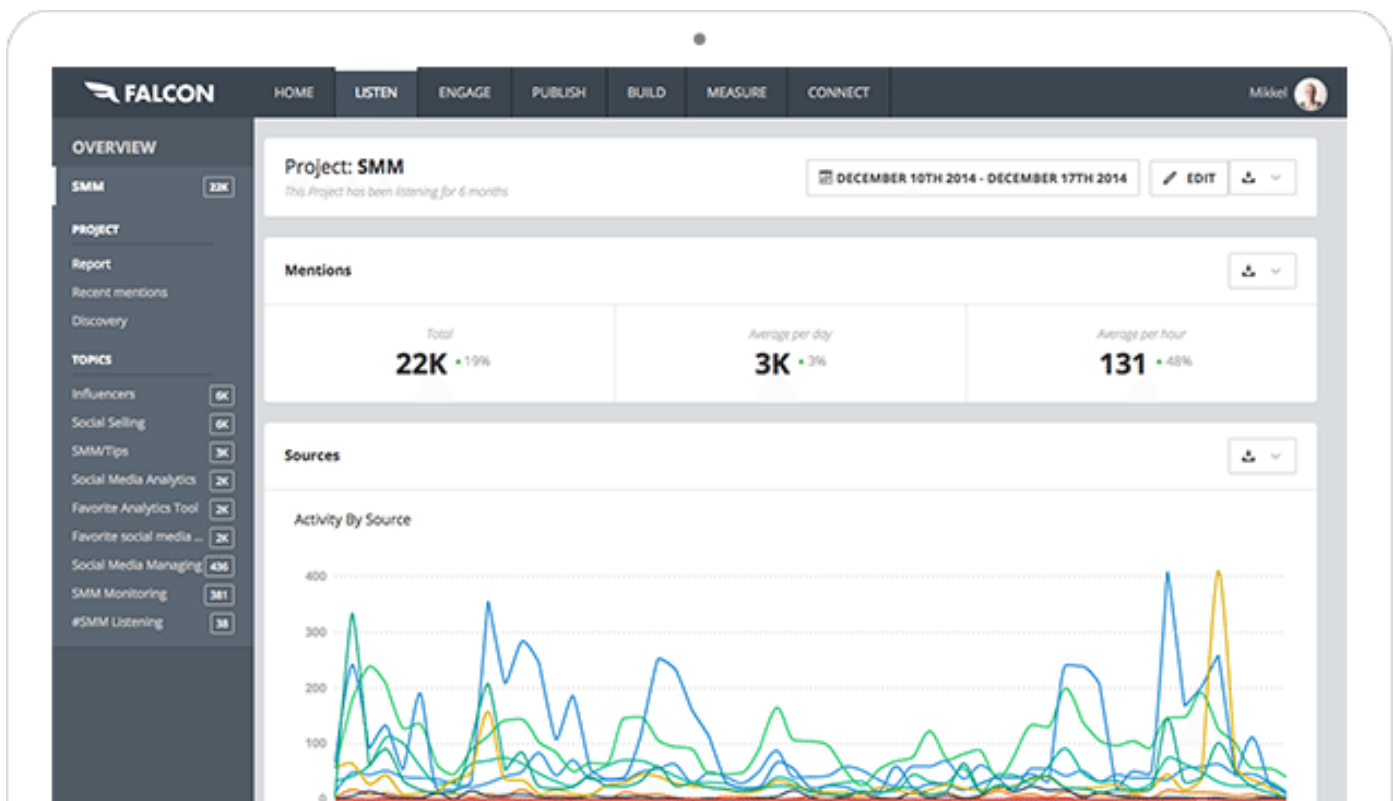
The interface is very clean and spaced well, so individual messages you want to monitor in the Engage feed don't pile up on one another. Everything is easy to digest and act upon when necessary.

You can quickly sort what channels (social networks) you want to view and even create specifics around each. For example, you can choose to respond to direct messages in Twitter or Facebook or remove from view posts from your own office. Search according to tags, priority accounts (maybe a prospective customer) or keywords.

If you're like any business making itself available online, you're bound to get some folks unhappy with your services. If they're particularly nasty, Falcon may detect them as spam and filter their opinion into a separate stream for you to review. It's

easy to miss these colorful gems of encouragement from time to time, so it helps

having them automatically detected so you can smile and respond in kind. I mean, with kindness.



Furthering this concept is the Sentiment grade that Falcon gives to posts and responses. The software automatically assigns a Positive, Neutral or Negative label to each. From there, you can confirm, override or respond.

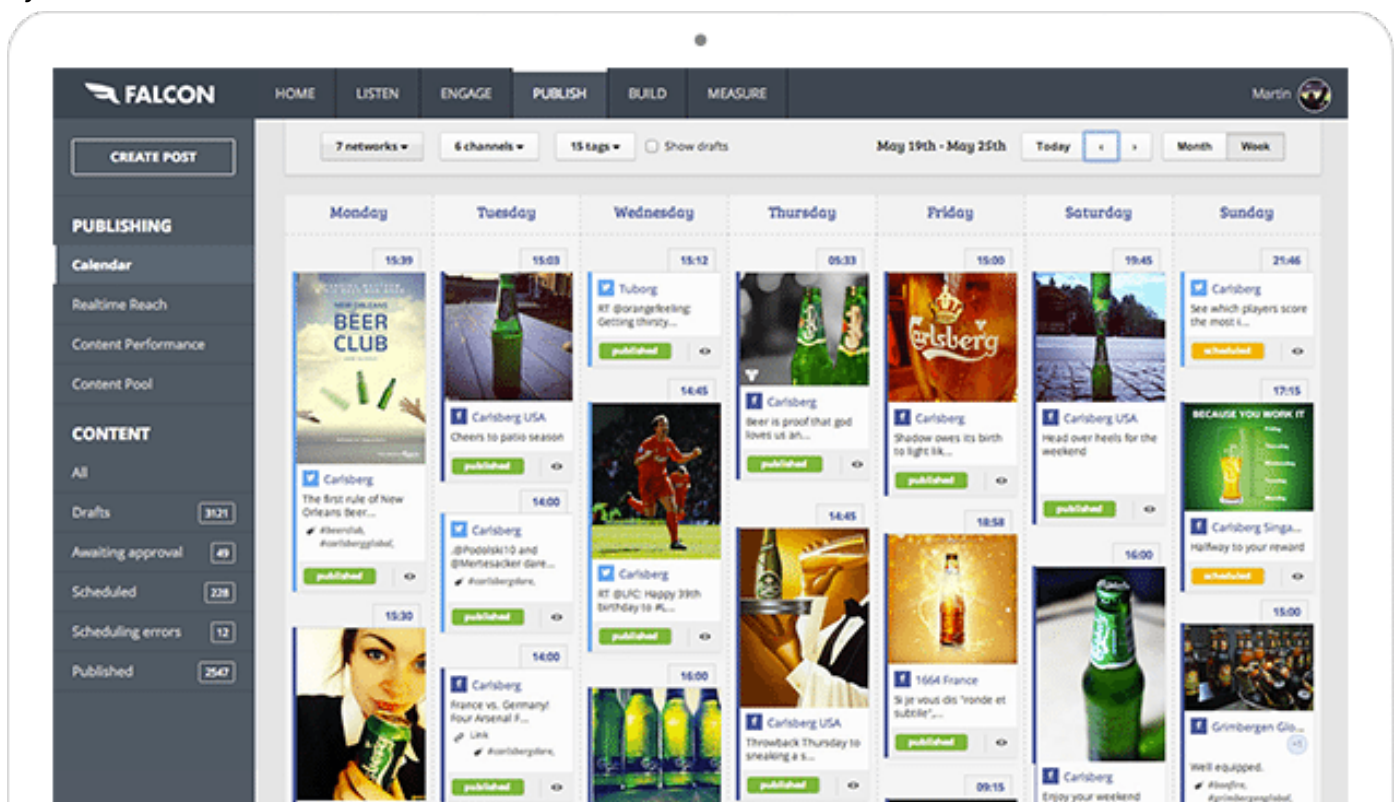
This is a pretty compelling bit of value considering the outright vitriol that Internet tough guys like to spit at companies who somehow didn't meet their clearly reasonable expectations of an above-market cash sale within 48 hours.

Falcon arranges your social messages like an email conversation, stacking them and then providing options such as Like, Respond or Delete. Since each message that garners engagement is treated individually, you're able to respond on a more personal level.

Agent and marketing teams will like Falcon for its collaboration features, which allow people to assign response and add internal comments, like a social media to-do. This is good for posts about certain properties or events overseen by different agents.

Whereas Rignite and Sprout Social give you the option of managing content via a calendar view, Falcon defaults to it. That's not good or bad; big-picture folks will dig it.

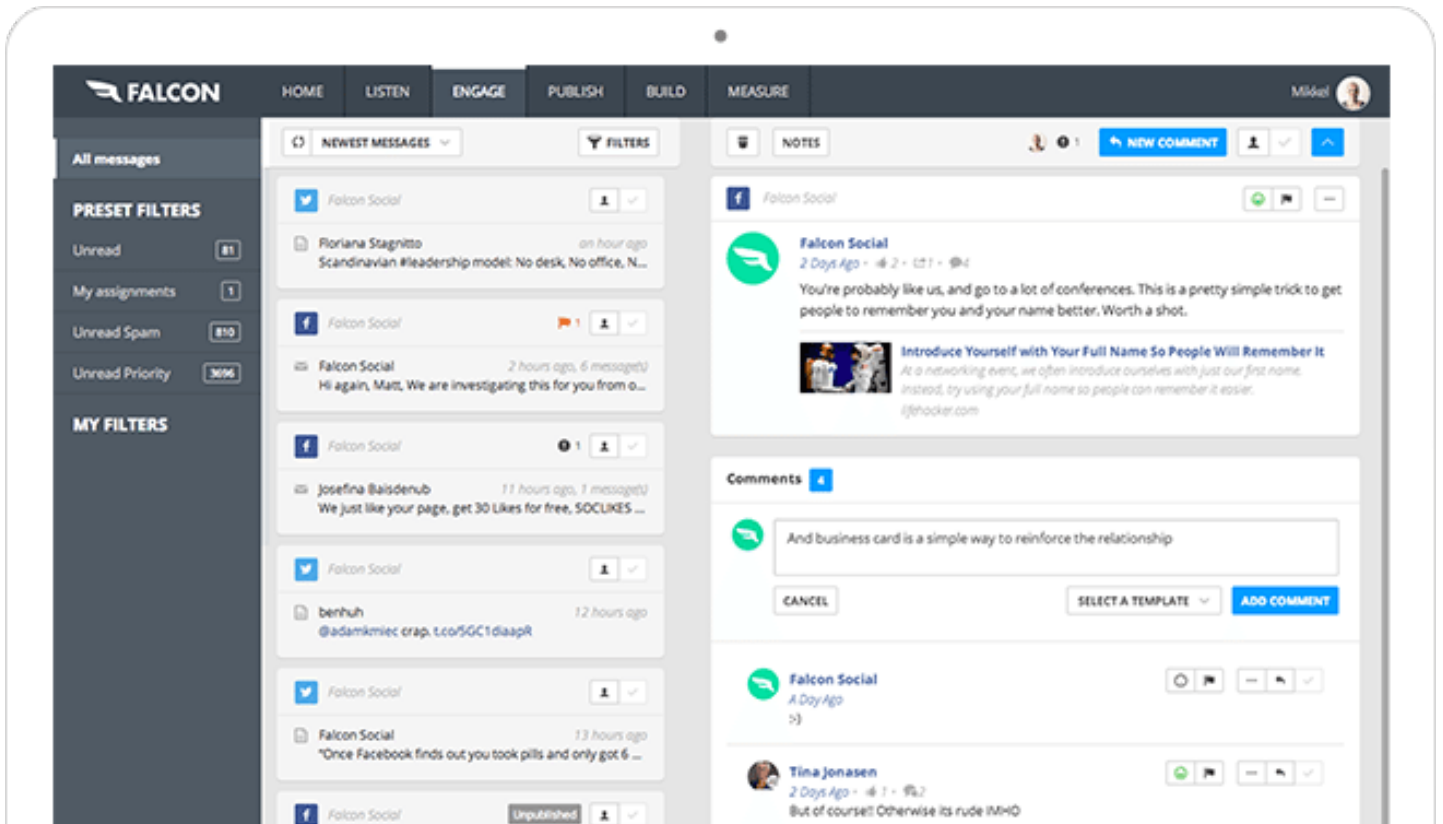
Each day has a small icon of the social channel to which something will publish, and you can select each to review the message details, or you can click "Add Post" to create a new one for that specific day.



I tend to like the Week view, which looks like a Pinterest board with small visual summaries of each post. It's clean and reassures me right away as to what's going out in the next few days. Each view can be filtered by network, keyword or tag.

Building content is as simple as selecting the network and typing text or uploading an image. You can import albums or build one within Falcon, as well as insert links, edit descriptions and have URLs automatically shortened. If you're already familiar with the dynamics of managing your social, nothing in this facet of the software will intimidate you.

What's most important here is audience targeting, which Falcon enables to a pretty granular level. You can direct a post at a specific location, or choose some basic demographics, like age, education level, gender and marital status. Agents who sell age-restricted communities or any property type that appeals to a narrow audience would find this aspect of Falcon particularly appealing.



Posts can also be assigned an approval process, another feature that may appeal to agencies with marketing teams — or micromanagers.

Managing performance is easy with Falcon, which tracks peak times of engagement for each post and offers insights into when you may want to repeat a post or create something new to improve interest.

Assuming you name each campaign after a property or open house, the tracking tools allow you to filter by tag and campaign title. This way, agents can easily report back to customers about their marketing efforts, or just choose to place a new picture, change the headline or adjust the price.

For really involved marketers, Falcon enables users to build custom Facebook applications with little difficulty. These can involve video embeds, forms, images and an array of contact capture mechanisms to fully engage your audience. Again, this is going to benefit those who have dedicated marketing staff and agents committed to outreach.

The close

Falcon is a big piece of marketing software.

Like most social media management packages, it's best for large firms with marketing staff and agent teams who can work together to promote listings and extend a brand beyond buying and selling houses. Multi-office brands would also benefit.

Falcon's interface and organization of information help it stand out from others I've reviewed. The product is clearly concerned with user interaction because it's so intuitive to navigate and manage.

I like **Rignite's** individual campaign manager better, but the Sentiment ratings and look and feel of Falcon make it a sure winner.



TECH REVIEWS, VIDEO

Emma is smart, sophisticated and pretty

A CRM and email marketing tool to help make your business life run smoothly



by [Craig Rowe](#) on May 26, 2015

Have suggestions for products that you'd like to see reviewed by our real estate technology expert? Email Craig Rowe at craig@inman.com.

The pitch

The two questions I get most often are:

1. Can you recommend a CRM?
2. Can you recommend an email marketing tool?

I credit this to these tools being the most often used, and the most often neglected. Eventually, users blame the software, not, well ... apathy.

Whatever the case, it's important that your next email management provider have some things that stand out in the industry to help you understand why it costs what it does, and to help you want to use it.

Maybe you want better customer support; maybe you need Salesforce integration. Or, maybe you want a better way to track your messages' performance. Whatever it is you need in an email marketing partner, make sure that **Emma** gets a spot in your due diligence.

The sale

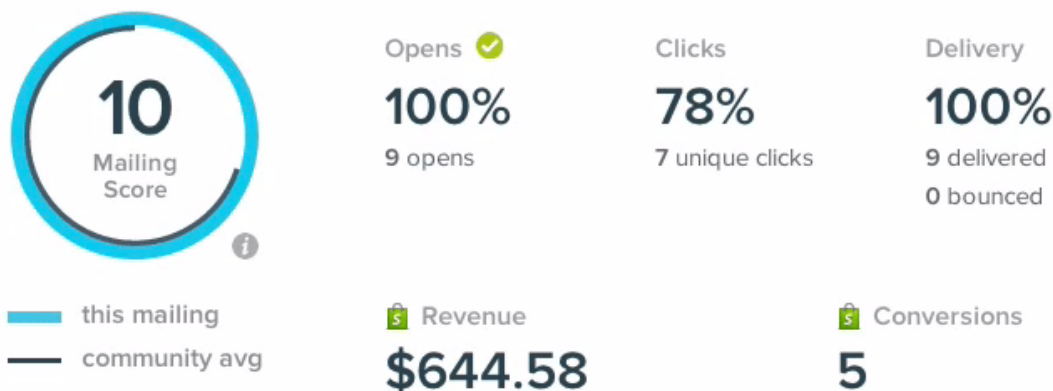
I find Emma highly open to its customers. From support resources to video messages from executives, the company is making itself accessible. I like that.

Emma also does a good job of finding the right industry partners to benefit its customers. For example, its recent handshake with Avari allows Emma users to very easily drag and drop dynamic social media content directly into templates.

Using this option, users can include an actual Instagram or Facebook feed directly into the body of a message.

Tips for stylin' your tiny space

Odds & Ends <shop@oddsandends.com> to **9 individuals**



This is a terrific way to go beyond just entering little buttons or a plead to share. Agents can drop in Instagram shots of clients at closings or the local coffee shop in a fast-selling neighborhood. This feature also demonstrates that you have an active, participatory online presence, which will further augment how readers view you.

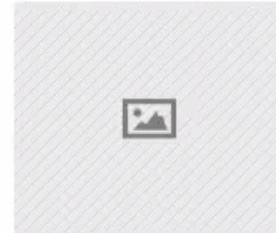
In addition to partnering with Salesforce, Emma has recently combined forces with Eventbrite, a popular online venue for agents to promote open houses and classes. If you want to push out several open houses for example, Emma allows for multiple Eventbrite events in a single message, and you can track registrations directly in Emma's metrics dashboard.

These third-party integrations translate into ease of use. It means the software was built well enough to allow for easy collaboration. For users, that means you'll be getting an email provider that is always capable of adding more features to better your investment.



Lorem Ipsum

Dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Duis euismod ultrices lacinia. Aenean eget urna ut diam hendrerit accumsan.



Lorem Ipsum

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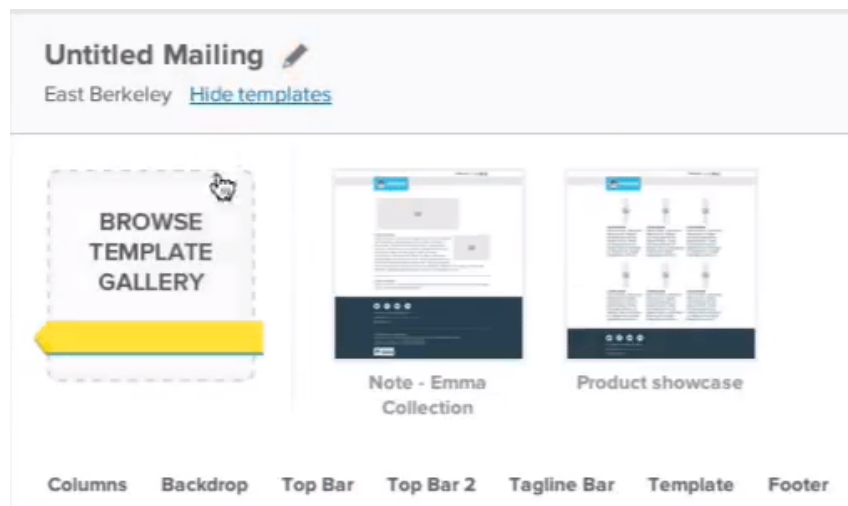
Lorem Ipsum

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Emma does a lot of the basics well, too. Its home screen has been overhauled recently to make tracking your message performance visual and intricate.

The folks behind Emma have created a scoring system that scales each message from 1 to 10. Each message score is based on a tally of each result, like opens, clicks or unsubscribes. This is an effective way to understand how messages stack up against one another. It gives users something to shoot for with each send.

Emma also applies ratings to individual components of a message, scoring sidebars, images and links separately so you can better understand a template's performance, or know if one home picture isn't as click-provoking as another.



The tracking also includes device type and email client used, allowing you to get a nice picture of where and how people are looking at your messages.

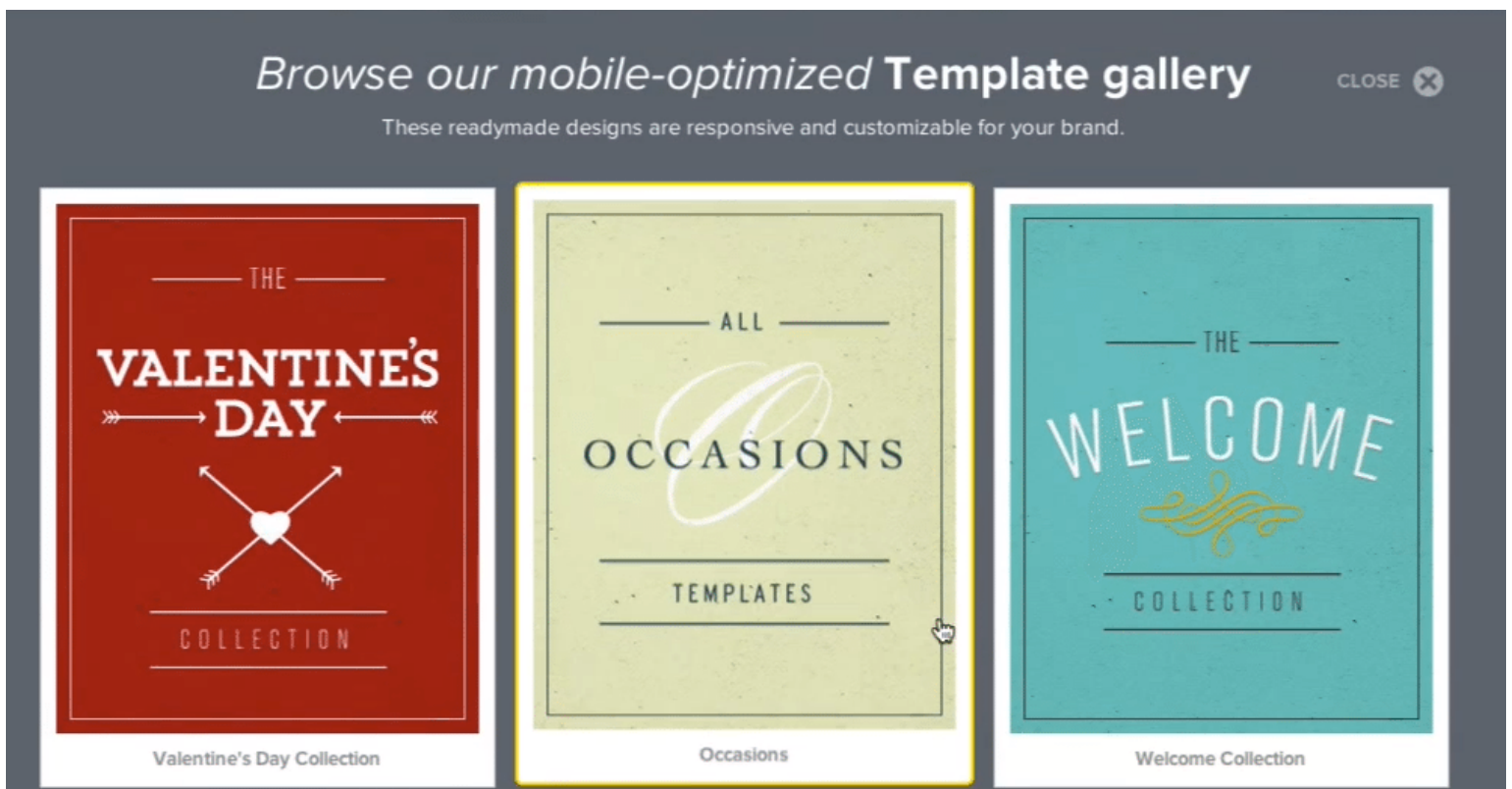
Emma also has a unique email builder. It gives you a very clean, organized canvas on which to build, using a lot of icons for quick scrolling between sections, and it includes a device viewer so you can visually test your message on a phone or tablet.

Pictures and videos are easy to drag and upload, and text is simple to edit. It looks better than most email builders I've used.

I can't talk about email without mentioning segmentation. It's critical, and Emma knows this. You can very easily create A/B split messages (one email sends to two lists) to test subject lines and further understand your audience.

Emma also includes a very sharp automated messaging feature. This makes it really stand out. For example, let's say you send an invite for class on home loans and refinancing that a lender partner is holding. Using segments of your list, you can create and send an automated message for each audience within your great contact list.

For example, first-time homebuyer subscribers will want to get something different out of the event than your investor clients. Craft a unique, automated message for each party to ensure you're addressing their unique needs. Each time a person in a designated audience registers, they receive a more personal response.



The close

Emma's tools can make you spend a lot of time thinking about how you brand yourself. There are plenty of unique features here, but none of them are hard to use. The entire interface is clearly thought about every time a new piece of the puzzle is inserted.

Emma also clearly thinks about the strategic needs of customers before adding a feature, meaning that if they include it, you probably need it.

This is a very comprehensive, intuitive piece of marketing software. If you are even considering a new approach to your email outreach, ask Emma.

Do you use Emma? What do you think? Leave a comment and let us know!

Do you have a product for our tech expert to review? Email Craig Rowe at craig@inman.com.



THE DAILY REAL ESTATE

TECH REVIEW:

PLANWISECONNECT

TECH REVIEW, TECHNOLOGY

PlanwiseConnect keeps agents in front of their Web-browsing buyers



by [Craig Rowe](#) on May 27, 2015

Have suggestions for products that you'd like to see reviewed by our real estate technology expert? Email Craig Rowe (<mailto:craig@inman.com>).

The pitch

It's official: The industrywide property portal debate has devolved into a full-fledged circus of back-biting executives and partisan practitioners baying and barking back and forth on whatever stage has the suitable bandwidth.

From article comment threads to industry conference panels, everyone has a take on what lies ahead for listing properties on the Internet. And somewhere in the middle of this proverbial Maury Povich episode lies what's best for real estate agents and the homebuying public.

And because buyers still use desktop browsers more than any other interface to look for homes, ensuring online information is clean, accurate and easily obtained remains as critical as ever.

However, until that's sorted out, maybe a little browser extension from **PlanwiseConnect** can help agents stay in front of clients when they search for properties on the Internet.

The sale

I know an agent here in Las Vegas running a local radio ad questioning the veracity of Zillow's now infamous Zestimate.

Like a calorie counter on a gym treadmill, Zestimates, monthly payment estimates and any other form of portal calculator type, are simply using a broadly questionable list of assumptions to deliver consumer real estate data.

But when an agent sends their buyer client the link to the PlanwiseConnect toolbar, the client has at his or her disposal a detailed, personally relevant housing expense tool.

After the user completes an initial financial profile, Planwise plugs that data into the ownership costs of whatever property they peruse on any of the major listing sites.

The screenshot shows a web interface for a mortgage calculator. At the top left is the 'planwise' logo. To its right is a green banner with the text 'Good AFFORDABILITY'. Below this is the title 'New Property' with three dots underneath. The calculator has four input rows: 'Purchase Price' with a text box containing '\$450,000.00'; 'Closing Costs' with a text box containing '\$9,000.00'; 'Down Payment' with a slider set to '20% • \$90,000.00'; and 'Interest Rate' with a text box containing '4.5%' and minus/plus buttons. Below these is a section for 'Mortgage Payment' showing '\$1,824.07/month' in large orange text. At the bottom, there is an 'Advanced Mode' link and a 'NEXT' button with a right-pointing arrow. The footer contains a 'SECURITY' icon and a 'Login' link.

The calculator pulls in sales price, homeowners association (HOA) fees, interest rates, closing costs and all other relevant homeownership expenses published on the listing, and then it juxtaposes them with the user's profile, which consists of items like down payment, available cash, net income, monthly payment preferences — even rental income if getting a roommate is an option.

Fields can be tweaked if needed, and users can create different financial scenarios as they go.

The toolbar, appearing on the bottom of the browser window, shows the agent's face and name, and offers a chat window for the user to ask questions or request a showing for that property.

2039 Clemens Rd,
Oakland, CA 94602

FOR SALE
\$749,000
Zestimate®: \$856,746

4 beds · 2 baths · 2,100 sqft

EST. MORTGAGE

planwise **Bad AFFORDABILITY**

New Property

Purchase Price: \$749,000.00

Closing Costs (est.): \$14,980.00

Down Payment: 20% • \$149,800.00

Interest Rate: 4.50%

Mortgage Payment: **\$3,036.06/month**

Next ▶

Advanced Mode

Share With My Agent | Check Affordability | Get Pre-Approved

Your Name
Phone
paul@inman.com

I am interested in 2039 Clemens Rd, Oakland, CA 94602.

Contact Agent

I want to get pre-approved

Learn how to appear as the agent above

Sales Center Grand Opening!
GET MORE INFO NOW!

Toll Brothers
America's Luxury Home Builder

Similar Homes for Sale

FOR SALE
\$698,000
3 beds, 2.0 baths, 1831 sq
4016 Fruitvale Ave, Oakl..

FOR SALE
\$799,000
4 beds, 2.0 baths, 2500 sq

Client users also have the ability to create lists of favorites based on URL and using the financial data for each, create an accurate comparative cost analysis of the properties they like. Agents can export the MLS# of each for verification.

Agents can choose to include the profile of a local lender partner in their toolbar so their clients can also keep them in the loop on properties that spark their interest.

Home Details for 330 S Mazon St

36 Days on Trulia

177 v

330 S Mazon St Immaculate ranch style home is move in ready with 3 bedrooms & 1.5 baths. Entertain family & friends in the spacious living room or outside on the large deck overlooking your fenced in backyard with mature trees. All appliances stay!

 Schools 

Elementary School

Above Average

PlanwiseConnect



My Agent

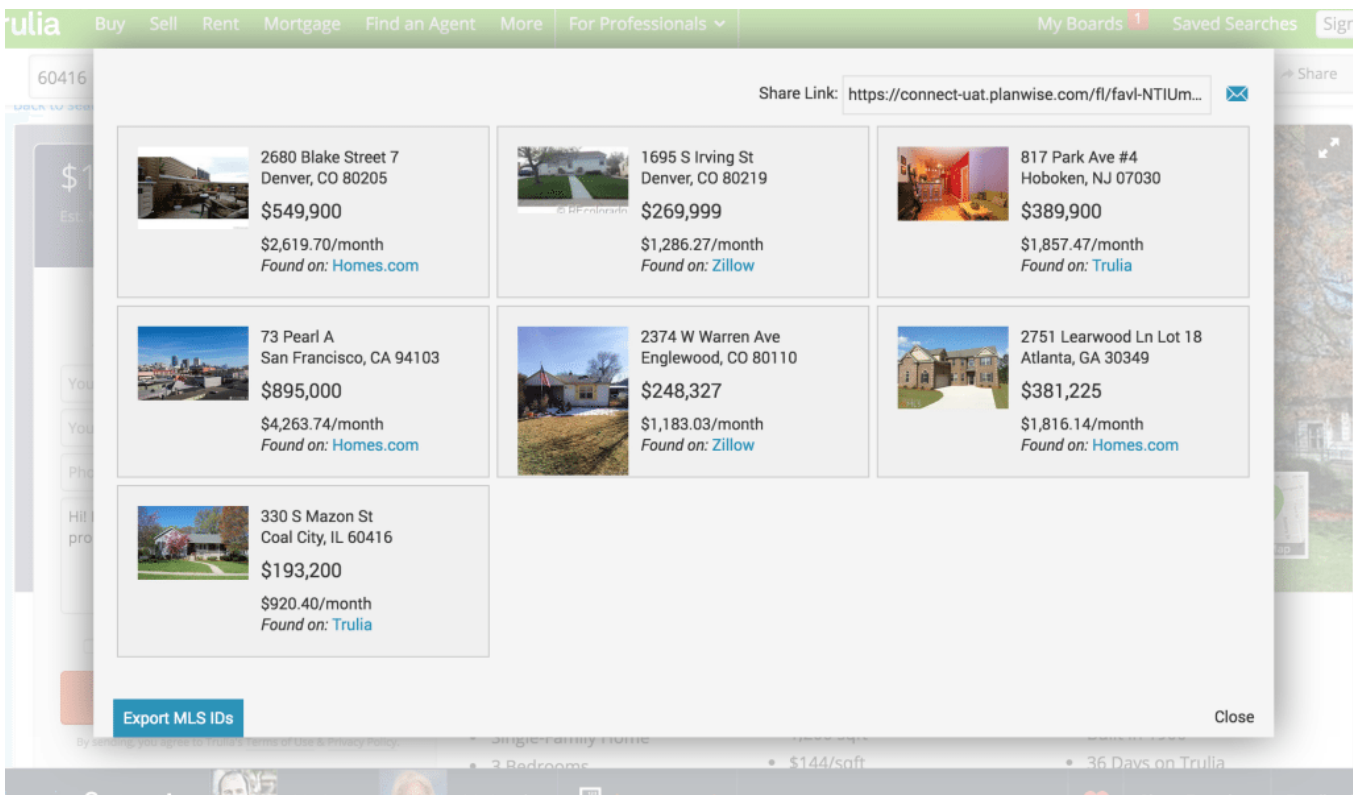


My Lender



\$1,409/month

The portal wars have unquestionably made it more difficult for consumers to get accurate information, despite the clear intention to do otherwise. Worse yet, consumers aren't aware. In the race to sell ads around data, we stopped caring about the data.



The screenshot shows the Trulia website interface with a grid of property listings. The listings include:

- 2680 Blake Street 7, Denver, CO 80205, \$549,900, \$2,619.70/month, Found on: Homes.com
- 1695 S Irving St, Denver, CO 80219, \$269,999, \$1,286.27/month, Found on: Zillow
- 817 Park Ave #4, Hoboken, NJ 07030, \$389,900, \$1,857.47/month, Found on: Trulia
- 73 Pearl A, San Francisco, CA 94103, \$895,000, \$4,263.74/month, Found on: Homes.com
- 2374 W Warren Ave, Englewood, CO 80110, \$248,327, \$1,183.03/month, Found on: Zillow
- 2751 Learwood Ln Lot 18, Atlanta, GA 30349, \$381,225, \$1,816.14/month, Found on: Homes.com
- 330 S Mazon St, Coal City, IL 60416, \$193,200, \$920.40/month, Found on: Trulia

At the bottom of the grid, there is an "Export MLS IDs" button and a "Close" button. The top navigation bar includes "Buy", "Sell", "Rent", "Mortgage", "Find an Agent", "More", "For Professionals", "My Boards", "Saved Searches", and "Sign".

Agents are also having to work harder to maintain their relationships. While there's nothing inherently wrong with that, the implicit support of client disloyalty on the part of the portals isn't helping the industry in the slightest.

PlanwiseConnect takes the top concern for homebuyers (affordability), adds value to it, and gives it to agents as a support tool for maintaining relationships. Clearly, Planwise is very much just that, a supportive marketing bolt-on to your broader outreach plan.

The screenshot displays the PlanwiseConnect financial calculator interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with 'trulia' logo and links for 'Buy', 'Sell', 'Rent', 'Mortgage', 'Find an Agent', 'More', and 'For Professionals'. Below this, there are 'My Boards' (with a red notification badge '1'), 'Saved Searches', and 'Sign In' buttons. The main content area is a dark-themed modal window titled 'Property' with tabs for 'My Finances' and 'Default Settings'. The calculator shows the following data:

Purchase Price	\$172,500.00	Property Tax	\$100.62/month
Closing Costs	\$6,900.00	Property Expenses	\$143.75/month
Down Payment	\$34,500.00	HOA Fee	\$/month
Mortgage Principal	\$138,000.00	Home Insurance	\$57.50/month
Loan Type	20 years	Total Property Expenses (excluding mortgage)	\$301.88/month
Interest Rate	3.80%	Rental Income	\$/month
Mortgage Payment	\$821.79/month	Initial Month's Tax Benefit	\$177.42/month
		Total Income/Benefit	\$177.42/month

At the bottom of the modal, it shows 'My Home Buying & Ownership Budget' as \$2,314/month and 'Total Net Monthly Cost' as \$946/month. A 'Close' button is located in the bottom right corner of the modal. Below the modal, there's a footer bar with 'PlanwiseConnect' logo, 'My Agent' profile, 'My Lender' profile, a calculator icon, '\$946/month', a heart icon, 'Show Favorites', and 'Feedback'.

To get the most of your \$199/year Planwise account, agents should connect the link to the extension on just about everything they do, from email marketing to social media profiles.

The close

I've made it clear in prior columns that I like software with a specific purpose, solutions that target an obvious need. PlanwiseConnect meets this qualification.

PlanwiseConnect also looks great. For a financial calculator to make me want to interact with it, it has to be this well-designed. It's simple to use, fast for the user, and, best of all, provides accurate information.

The amount of misinformation and generalizations about real estate that have bled from the battlefield of the portal content wars is leaving in its wake an informationally anemic homebuying public.

Maybe PlanwiseConnect is the little infusion of market intelligence agents need to ensure their clients remain on this side of the market.



TECH REVIEWS, TECHNOLOGY

More than mobile, GoConnect is smart, common-sense productivity software



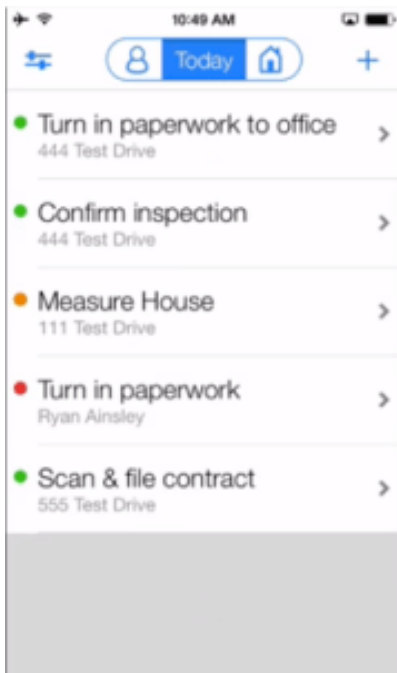
by [Craig Rowe](#) on May 28, 2015

Have suggestions for products that you'd like to see reviewed by our real estate technology expert? Email Craig Rowe (<mailto:craig@inman.com>).

The pitch

I think we've reached the point at which software developers can stop trying to sell agents on the benefits of mobile applications.

More specifically, marketing teams can cease use of terms like "agents on the go" and "always connected." Isn't it pretty much assumed that a relatively new product's success will be predicated on the degree of its mobile functionality?



GoConnect markets itself to busy agents on the go.

But it doesn't need to. It just is a real estate transaction management solution. Even lazy agents who don't go anywhere can use it.

Sure, GoConnect is designed for your smartphone, but our smartphones are no longer mobile, they're omnipresent. In our offices. On our couches. In our bathrooms.

Point is, the team behind GoConnect should sell on its merits, not its mobility.

The sale

GoConnect says it's a CRM. It also talks about being a checklist app. It very well may be both. I see it as transaction management software.

It really doesn't need a strict definition, though, because it can help real estate agents in a number of ways.

Much of GoConnect's functionality leverages the common taps and swipes and phone rotation commands of whatever smartphone OS you use, making the learning curve quite painless. For example, rotate your iPhone to switch from today's list of tasks to a weekly, more granular view.

The power of GoConnect's four-color categorization really demonstrates its value here, as each item on your calendar can be quickly defined by either yellow, green, red or blue. Tap on what's more pertinent and get to work.

The visuals are color-coded with icons for leads and transactions, and it uses fat, vibrant control buttons that invite interaction.

You should know by now that I'm a rather vocal advocate for engaging interface design, and GoConnect has it dialed in.

Overall, what GoConnect will do is help you manage the people, tasks and actions related to a transaction. This is why I think it's more of a productivity tool than a true CRM — but don't take that as a pejorative.

GoConnect employs an interconnected system of checklists that start at the 50,000-foot level of initial lead contact and eventually delves into ground-level task lists, like those that follow a lead's house going under contract.

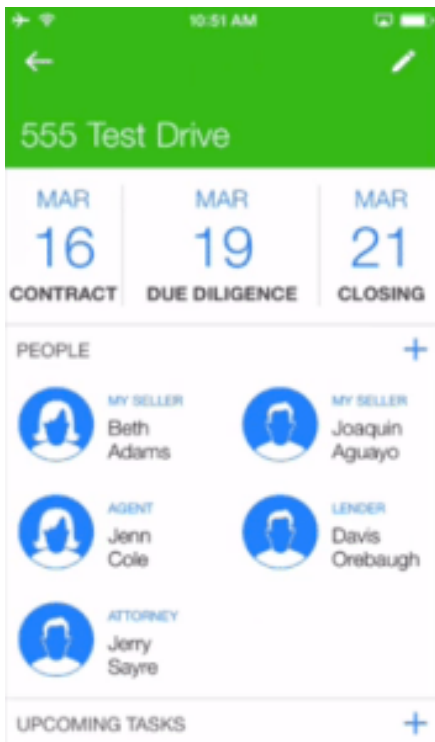


It logically separates your workflow into New Listings, New Buyer Contract, My Listing Sold and Post Closing. Each colored category, or transaction type, has an included checklist that can be further customized should you want to add unique tasks or employ personal jargon or nomenclature.

While the intrinsic task breakdowns are plenty comprehensive given the background of GoConnect's developers, almost every transaction has its own issues that would demand unique tasks to be created.

It is important that software supports the way you handle a home sale. Even though GoConnect is very intuitive, don't let its ease of use lull you into not committing to it. Take time to customize the workflows and establish a settings protocol that best supports your habits.

There are some features within GoConnect that show just how much value software can have when it's built by actual industry practitioners.



When you tap a current transaction, the most critical data is presented cleanly and quickly. Dates. People. Related tasks.

A transaction stakeholder can be contacted directly within the app via text, call or email. So can completed and remaining tasks.

GoConnect also delivers tasks and milestones to your phone's home screen, provided you give it permission to in the preferences.

When a new buyer contract or listing is added, GoConnect asks you for a few milestone dates, related contacts, and then automatically creates the requisite checklist and kicks off the transaction. It also has a list for new lead communication.

The contacts and lenders, inspectors and various contractors that populate a transaction are all added quickly from your phone's existing contact list, or can be created within GoConnect.

I like that only pertinent data is delivered via GoConnect's interface, an inherent benefit of mobile applications.

User experience designers are forced to be as concise and inclusive as possible when developing for the small screen. Not every app builder accomplishes this. GoConnect's team did, and it makes for a very uncluttered, productivity-oriented real estate tool.

The close

I don't believe every agent needs an enterprise-level CRM to be good at their job.

Industry pressure created by unfounded assumptions about best practices force many agents into unnecessary and expensive software partnerships. Use and interest of these instances tend to die on the vine, like gym memberships and being gluten-free.

GoConnect makes it simple to be better at your job. The product isn't overcooked with features or bulky third-party collaborations. It's its own solution, and wholly unique.

Don't kid yourself: You're on your phone all the time. It's not mobile business anymore.

It's just business.

*Do you use GoConnect? What do you think? Leave a comment and let us know!
(mailto:craig@inman.com).*

Do you have a product for our tech expert to review? Email Craig Rowe



TECH REVIEWS, TECHNOLOGY

5 best real estate technology tools of May 2015



by [Craig Rowe](#) on Jun 1, 2015

Have suggestions for products that you'd like to see reviewed by our real estate technology expert? Email Craig Rowe (<mailto:craig@inman.com>).

Here we go, another 30 days of real estate technology.

I've seen some really cool stuff in the last few weeks, and also a couple of real dogs.

I know that it's not easy for software developers or company executives to read that someone doesn't like their product. In response, I offer that this is largely an opinion column.

I look at functionality, practicality and applicability, and attempt to translate the facets of those characteristics into a summary of benefits for readers.

Try as I might to remove internal bias, internal bias is what drives my take on a product. I've been in an agent's shoes; I've sold property, leased commercial space, worked with investors and implemented technology solutions. Remember, there's always room for improvement, upgrades and — most importantly for your peace of mind — room for me being wrong.

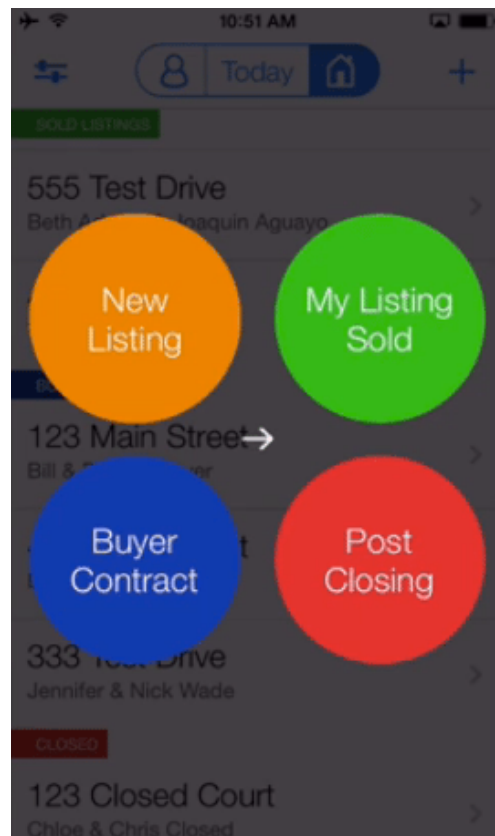
It's now June, and your sales year is about half over.

What kind of technology investments have you made this year? Have they made you better at your job in some way? I'd love to hear more about what you're using, why, and if you'll keep using it.

Share, and be heard.

GoConnect

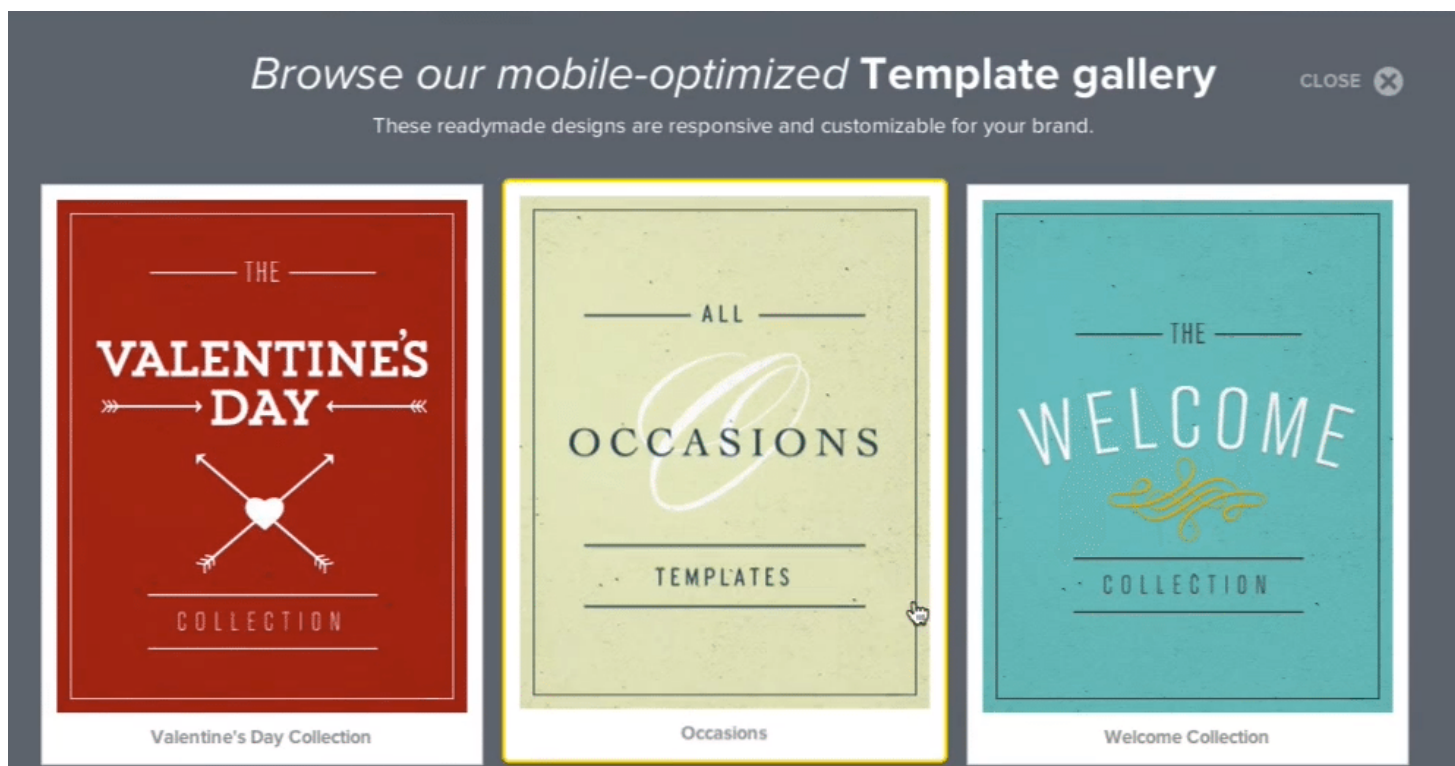
Reviewed just this week, this sleek smartphone software is superbly designed and super-efficient. It parses and color codes the way you work into four categories and comes with an action list for each. Quickly assign vendor contacts when you get a listing under contract or activate a new lead action list when a potential buyer comes into your circle.



GoConnect is concise in what transaction data it delivers, making it uncluttered and streamlined. It uses the native operating system commands from iOS and Android, like swipes, taps, and other forms of interaction to make it quick to learn and fast to use. Plus, it's free. There is a paid Pro version, but GoConnect doesn't withhold its most powerful features like many scaled software models do.

Emma


Even though Emma is the most expensive email marketing tool out there, it stands as a stark example of why good software is worth paying for. Emma's team clearly devotes ample time to studying user experience, because it's a joy to navigate. Clean. Attractive. Nothing gets in your way as you build, send and track messages.



It makes dynamic social media integration as simple as drag-and-drop, and it also uses a unique grading system to encourage users to make each email better than the last. You also can link emails to Eventbrite to promote open houses and company events. It's a full-on strategic marketing solution and larger agencies should give it serious consideration.

PlanwiseConnect

This follow-your-buyer Web browser tool wins for innovation and practicality. As your buyer clients paddle through the swamp of content that is the collective major portals, PlanwiseConnect keeps you in the boat with them via an omnipresent financial calculator and contact interface neatly attached to the bottom of the screen.



The screenshot displays a real estate listing for "330 S Mazon St". The main heading is "Home Details for 330 S Mazon St". Below this, it indicates "36 Days on Trulia" and "177 views". The description reads: "330 S Mazon St Immaculate ranch style home is move in ready with 3 bedrooms & 1.5 baths. Entertain family & friends in the spacious living room or outside on the large deck overlooking your fenced in backyard with mature trees. All appliances stay!". To the right, there is a "Schools" section showing "Elementary School" with an "Above Average" rating. At the bottom, a dark toolbar contains the "PlanwiseConnect" logo, a "My Agent" profile picture, a "My Lender" profile picture, and a financial calculator icon showing "\$1,409/month".

Instead of the woefully lacking bits of economic data buyers are given about affordability when looking at a potential domicile, PlanwiseConnect uses a personalized profile of their complete financial position to help them truly understand the cost of ownership. Your name and mug are readily accessible via the toolbar, as are the details of any lender partners you choose to have participate. Cool product.

Nimble

Nimble is a frighteningly effective tool, in the sense that it cements the notion — the fact, rather — that nothing online is private. If you're online, you're public. And Nimble will let users know whatever they want to know about you. Using a complicated set of linkages between backdoor data and front-facing social media, Nimble creates instant profiles of prospects and people just by hovering over them with your trackpad arrow.

It's quick and looks good, and it's highly useful for super-connected real estate agents. The new interface plugs directly into your browser and simply slides out to reveal what you need when you need it. Nimble also greatly enhances Salesforce, Top Producer, and Propertybase CRMs.

13421 Hennepin Ave, Minneapolis – \$180,000

Home Sweet Home! Newly remodeled kitchen w/ custom cabinets, new countertops & stainless steel appliances. Custom built-ins, open floor plan, refinished hardwood floors, freshly painted, with a finished lower level. Located just steps away from restaurants and shops, easy [urban living at its best](#). Must See!

Next Open House in:

24 : **8** : **10** : **59**
DAYS HOURS MINUTES SECONDS

[REQUEST A SHOWING](#)



LeadPages

Versatile Web marketing tool LeadPages is one of those rare software products that does a lot of things very well. Primarily, it helps agents capture leads using highly targeted landing pages, event promotion pop-ups, and an array of good-looking, contemporary information capture tactics.

Real estate agents can build mini-sites to promote individual listings within their own domain (important) or use a feature called LeadBoxes to subtly pester website guests into giving you an email address. LeadPages can send contacts straight to Salesforce, and higher account levels integrate with MailChimp, Constant Contact and iContact.

What will stand out in the world of real estate technology next month? Something you use?

Keep the suggestions and feedback coming, and I'll keep trying to help you spend money on what I think you need.

Do you use any of these products? What do you think? Leave a comment and let us know!

Do you have a product for our tech expert to review? Email Craig Rowe at craig@inman.com.



TECH REVIEWS, TECHNOLOGY

ListingDomains.com is much more than a single-property website builder — and you don't need any of it

Property-specific Web domains take away from parent site SEO -- but if you choose to pursue that strategy, this tool works well



by [Craig Rowe](#) on Jun 2, 2015

Have suggestions for products that you'd like to see reviewed by our real estate technology expert? Email Craig Rowe at craig@inman.com.

The pitch

It's valuable to offer a Web page that features everything a potential buyer should know about a listing.

However, if a property is registered under its own domain — that is, “1313MockingbirdLane.com” — it does little for the online popularity of its parent website. In fact, it detracts from it.

Point is, it's better from an SEO standpoint, as well as for several other reasons, to have the capability to build individual listing pages under your own domain.

Nevertheless, I spent some time checking out **ListingDomains.com**.

The sale

If you're going to pay for a website, your first priority should be including a tool that allows you to build your own listing pages.

For some reason, the real estate industry has grown to rely on a bevy of third-party services like ListingDomains.com to build single-listing websites. This has fascinated me for years.

I know sellers may be enamored with the idea of a single-listing site, but clients are not agreeing to list with a URL — they're listing with you, your brand promise as a real estate agent.


Isn't that why you create big signs with your logo and choose to affiliate with national brands? Isn't that why you spend thousands on CRMs and apps and email marketing and expensive headshots?

If your brand matters so much, you should do all you can to keep people in front of it.

1820 Empire Industrial Ct Santa Rosa, CA 95403

Request Additional Info
Schedule a Viewing
FREE Listing Updates
View Map
Satellite Photo
Take an Area Tour
Local Schools
Tips for Home Buyers
Calculate Your Payment
Print Flyer
Email This Listing
Property Feedback
Additional Documents

SLIDESHOW II FULLSCREEN





Grand Foyer

BACK NEXT

\$589,000

Beds : 4
Baths : 2
Type : Single Family
Size : 1645 square feet
Year : 1964
MLS : 20654557

Contact
View My Website
Share This Listing



And intrinsic to that should be a website that pulls in leads and keeps them there, a site that has its own tools to build compelling listing pages.

Listing pages provide your site with relevant, valuable content. You lose all of that value when you choose to put it all on individual domains unrelated to your business.

Yes, a single-listing site built with ListingDomains.com will have your name and contact information on it so clicks or calls may come back your way, but why send someone to your back door when you paid for all that curb appeal?

1820 Empire Industrial Ct
Santa Rosa, CA 95403

\$589,000

Beds : 4
Baths : 2
Type : Single Family
Size : 1645 square feet
Year : 1964
MLS : 20654557

Contact
View My Website
Share This Listing

Modern Kitchen

Request Additional Info
Schedule a Viewing
FREE Listing Updates
View Map
Satellite Photo
Take an Area Tour
Local Schools
Tips for Home Buyers
Calculate Your Payment
Print Flyer
Email This Listing
Property Feedback
Additional Documents

Furthermore, when you have 10 listings, that's 11 different sites to manage, including your own. All of that great real estate content, all of it evidence that you're a terrific listing agent, sitting on its own out there in the Internet, without a parent site.

Websites should be built around the user experience using deliberate strategies to get visitors to read your content, share it and, most importantly, take interest in the homes you're selling.

Why invest in any of that if your intent is to send them somewhere else to see your product? Every agent seems to have an IDX feed so folks can search everyone else's listings. Yet, you send them somewhere else to view your own? Strange.

ListingDomains.com is functionally fine. It'll do what you need it to do. The websites are visually lacking but, I suppose, highly informative, and your \$50 single-site fee gives you a lot of marketing features. You can have a ton of pictures, upload documents and send the link all over the place.

You can choose to leverage ListingDomains.com's Facebook app that will present all of your listings on your page, its "video" builder (not a video) that creates a music-backed photo slideshow of a listing's highlights, or its free sample site tool for listing presentations.

ListingDomains.com thinks that CRM stands for "contact relationship manager," so it sells customers the ability to see who has completed the capture forms on your listing site. You can log in to review recent submissions and export them to a number of other formats and tools.

Please, don't think this is an actual customer relationship management (CRM) solution. This is a very weak upsell at best.


SLIDESHOW II FULLSCREEN

\$589,000


Quick Links

- » Request Additional Info
- » Schedule a Viewing
- » FREE Listing Updates
- » View Map
- » Satellite Photo
- » Take an Area Tour
- » Local Schools
- » Tips for Home Buyers
- » Calculate Your Payment
- » Print Flyer
- » Email This Listing
- » Property Feedback
- » Additional Documents
- » Agent Login


BACK NEXT



Welcome to your New Home!



1820 Empire Industrial Ct, Santa Rosa, CA 95403



Jane Agent
DEMO Website
707.206.7693

For small upgrade fees, agents can have a text code that will return a property's details to an interested party, as well as a listing sign rider with the property's domain name.

I think the text marketing feature is worthwhile, although I'm not a huge fan of the rider signs for reasons to which I already not so subtly alluded.

ListingDomains.com has a seemingly exhaustive list of "value-adds" that I view as dated and tedious.

It offers a CD-archiving service, audio tracks that auto-play upon site loading (#makeitstop), mortgage calculators, an email announcement to area agents, professionally printed postcards (Is there a black market of unprofessional postcard printers out there?) and even Craigslist-friendly listing pages.

I'm always anxious about technology solutions that want to be all things to all users, especially in the context of marketing. Just having a bunch of weapons at your disposal doesn't mean you're ready for war. There's nothing surgical about this strike.

The back-end design demonstrates a lack of interest in user engagement. I imagine the intent is to make ListingDomains.com a daily login; however, it has a long way to go to keep me logged in.

ListingDomains.com also creates QR codes for your listings.

Because, why not?

The screenshot shows the 'Properties Online Toolbox' interface for user Craig Rowe. At the top, there is a navigation bar with a 'P' logo, the tagline 'Web Tools for the Real Estate Professional.', a phone icon with the number '800.826.5123', and the text 'Properties Online Toolbox'. Below the navigation bar, the user's name 'Craig Rowe' is displayed. The main content area is divided into two sections: 'Listing Website Manager' and 'Account Manager'. The 'Listing Website Manager' section includes options to 'Order a New Property Website' (www.555MainStreet.com), 'Create or Edit a DEMO Website' (for your Listing Presentations), 'Edit Default Link Settings', 'Get a link to all of your listings', and 'Listing Websites Terms of Use'. The 'Account Manager' section includes options for 'Agent Profile', 'Office & Logo', and 'CRM: Manage your Leads & Contacts'. On the left side, there is a 'Main Menu' with links to 'Logout', 'Our Products' (Listing Domains Pricing, Listings Unlimited New!, Agent Websites), and 'Company Links' (FAQ, Contact Us, GO HOME). At the bottom left, there is a 'Live Chat' button with the text 'Have Questions? Need Help?'.

The close

There isn't much to say about ListingDomains.com. I wouldn't use it for anything other than creating single-listing websites, if that's an online marketing strategy you choose to employ.

It's highly affordable and has a lot of the tools you need to get a listing into the real estate wilds of the Internet — it just doesn't come with a manual for learning how to cohesively use all those tools.

Or a CRM.

Do you use ListingDomains.com? What do you think? Leave a comment and let us know!

Do you have a product for our tech expert to review? Email Craig Rowe at craig@inman.com.



MARKETING, TECH REVIEWS, TECHNOLOGY

HomeActions' newsletter solution is technologically healthy — make sure the content measures up

Slick interfaces mean little when the content behind them is flawed



by [Craig Rowe](#) on Jun 3, 2015

Have suggestions for products that you'd like to see reviewed by our real estate technology expert? Email Craig Rowe at craig@inman.com.

Editor's note: HomeActions has responded to this review and made the following statements

HomeActions content is written or edited by an experienced chief content officer. Freelance writers submit samples of work beforehand, and submissions are reviewed and edited. Articles are also run through a copyediting site.

The HomeActions system allows clients to upload articles they have written themselves, which do not go through the same vetting and editing process as the HomeActions-created content.

HomeActions' "exclusivity" feature also ensures that consumers are not sent articles by more than one HomeActions client.

The pitch

I've reviewed a number of stand-alone email marketing vendors in this column.

Regardless of which solution is right for you, things like interface, functionality and unique features amount to very little if you're not consistent in your promise to deliver useful, original material. The industry is riddled with terabytes of real estate information that's never been sent to homebuyers and sellers.

HomeActions aims to solve that never-sent content dilemma by providing and sending it for you. Sound interesting?

The sale

Right or wrong, I often judge professionalism by the way a person communicates. More specifically, by the way they write.

Before you pounce, I don't hold people to unreasonable standards of word choice or expect email responses in iambic pentameter.

I expect capital letters at the beginning of sentences, a rudimentary grasp of comma usage and an utter absence of emoticons. (Sorry, cave-dwellers; we have words now. And we stand upright.)

When I look at an email marketing software company that markets its differentiator as a supply of original, relevant content, I expect professionalism.

Unfortunately, HomeActions' open rate for worthwhile newsletters is staring at zero.

Sad face.

On the inside, however, HomeActions is great-looking software.

The user dashboard is highly organized and inviting. It uses a master list of icons to navigate its feature library, and I can't envision anyone having a hard time using it.

Christopher Pitre [Edit](#) [+ New Member](#)
Mobile: 240-408-4002 | cpitre@homeactions.net
Real Estate | HomeActions

Next Launch On Friday, June 20, 2014 hide

Currently Scheduled Articles for this Newsletter:

- Secrets For Choosing And Using Rugs
- Low Cost And No Cost Fixes For Overstuffed Closets
- Consumer Watchdog Warns: Mortgages And Retirement Don't Mix
- 4 Quick Ways To Make Sure You Have Enough Homeowners Insurance
- How Well Do You Know The Neighborhood?
- Local Entertainment And Events Calendar

There are no banners scheduled for this newsletter yet.

[Preview](#)

HomeActions also has a unique workflow for building messages and adding content that's unlike others in the industry.

Instead of dragging and dropping text fields, image boxes and social media icons into a blank message template, assembling a "blast" is done by simply choosing what you want to send from a list of articles and images; users don't see an email body or header until it's time to preview.

I love this. It puts content first and takes design away from the user. Unfortunately, whoever handles it now isn't much better.

Visually, the newsletters are dated eyesores. They also supply bland stock photos that everyone else can use, too. How's that customized?

However, I could stomach poor design if HomeActions' primary thrust for being wasn't that it provides content for you. But its articles are overdone, unsharable tripe.

As you scan a HomeActions article, and even the company's own Web copy, you can hear a voice that knows English well enough to tour Yellowstone National Park and understand enough to not bathe in Old Faithful, but not well enough for you to hire as a marketing copywriter.

your home's value?
discover how much your home is worth

Click and Learn

Hi, Nicole M.. Here are your Articles for Tuesday, June 03, 2014.

Sophisticated In Vienna!

Beautiful home located in a private Cul-de-Sac in the sought after community of Courthouse Oaks. Feel at home as you enter the two story foyer. Unwind in the Spacious family room where you overlook the gorgeous backyard setting. Conveniently located just minutes away from the Vienna Metro. Click **Full Article** link for more info and a tour.



[Full Article](#)

[Save Article](#)

[Article Feedback](#)

[Share Article](#)

I Am Your Market Insider!

Local Stats
Community Info
Schools, Tips & More

Rely On Me For Market Intel!

If you are looking for move or sitting on the fence, you need to know what's going on in the local market. I have a series of market reports that I can send you. Click on **Full Article** and you will see comprehensive data for Potomac Greens and the 22314 area.

I know this because I live in the world of Internet content. The writers at Inman compete for traffic with the type of content that HomeActions.net provides.

When articles are left out of sentences, capital letters appear midsentence on nonformal terms and, most egregiously, when content is jammed with deliberately juxtaposed

keywords, it's evident that the article isn't the work of an experienced writer.

Consider this testimonial from the front page of HomeActions.net:

"You may want to customize your heading and make it local with your area too, and it will go along way for you in strong feedback and keeping your name in front of people for referrals. Thank you Home Actions newsletter for being a valuable part of my client generating and retention business."

And this, from the first sample newsletter provided:

"If you are looking for move or sitting on the fence, you need to know what's going on in the local market. I have a series of market reports that I can send you. Click on Full Article and you will see comprehensive data for Potomac Greens and the 22314 area."

Take a minute to scroll through the quoted testimonials at the bottom of HomeActions.net, below the newsletter samples. Isn't there a familiar tone to each? It's almost as if the agents quoted know exactly what the search engines want to hear.

Hi, Patty - Here are your Articles for Wednesday, July 09, 2014.

Is this email not displaying correctly?
[View this in your browser](#)



Patty Cunningham

(o) 484-875-2600

(c) 610-659-4669

patty.cunningham@foxroach.com

232 Eagleview Blvd

Exton, PA 19341



[My Website](#)

[My Listings](#)

[Home Essentials](#)

[Real Estate on FB](#)

[Business Directory of Preferred](#)

[Contractors](#)

Hi, Patty - Here are your Articles for Wednesday, July 09, 2014.

The Local Stats Are Impressive! Check Your Area Out

Even if you are not buying or selling you can benefit from my comprehensive market reports and videos on what recently sold, up to last night! In addition I have market stats for **Chester Springs, Downingtown, Exton, West Chester and Phoenixville**



HomeActions' other misplaced marketing message is that it promotes its measurement of opens, click-thrus and reader content interaction as revolutionary. I can't help but wonder if the company is aware that measuring open rates is a technology almost 20 years old.

You can also share any HomeActions content directly to your social media accounts, which scares me even more, because that's releasing a great deal of bad into the Internet. This is why we "unfollow."

All that being said, I need to stress that HomeActions really is well-programmed, streamlined software.

Email addresses are easy to import; in fact, the company can do it for you. Relative to setting up your account and preferences, the interface is as equally appealing and evident. Again, I like the HomeActions software.

There is a tremendous market for low-wage, mass-produced Internet copy, and HomeActions is doing all it can to keep it flowing on behalf of your brand.

Articles like "These Deck Stains Last the Longest" and "Four Tricks to Spot Truly Eco-Friendly Furniture" are not timely or useful. Stuff like this is fatty filler, aiming for word counts. It's the reality television of real estate.

My HomeActions newsletter is a tool that promotes long term relationships with potential buyers and sellers. With one click I am able to share articles on all of my social media accounts. HomeActions is the most valuable marketing tool I currently use.

Deborah Laemmerhirt
Keller Williams



Good day day, You have the best support staff in the Philippines. I started in the end of April and not till December did I notice that none of my contacts were uploaded. Called out to support and Nelli Ronnelgensoli uploaded all the contacts and has been great support. Not to mention Barbara Friedmans kindness. If it were not for Nelli & Barbara I would have left. Happy Customer Deborah Ann Trenga Myers

Deborah Ann Trenga Myers
REALTOR: COLDWELL BANKER Real Estate Service



It's what it sends to your clients that I think you can do without.

The close

If you have a remotely sophisticated audience, or hope to build one, don't use HomeActions' content. Curate and write your own.

When it comes to providing content, keep in mind that you're never quite sure how many other customers of HomeActions are leveraging the same information, or at least a very close iteration of it.

I wouldn't be beating up HomeActions.net if the content they boasted about didn't show me multiple typos in customer-facing examples or reek of originating from a content farm, foreign or domestic.

One more time: The software seemingly functions effectively and does exactly what you want email software to do.

Except engage your audience.

Do you use HomeActions? What do you think? Leave a comment and let us know!

Do you have a product for our tech expert to review? Email Craig Rowe at craig@inman.com.



TECH REVIEWS, TECHNOLOGY

Asana is a clean, easy-to-learn and highly affordable team task manager

Platform was built to make business easier through collaboration



by [Craig Rowe](#) on Jun 4, 2015

Have suggestions for products that you'd like to see reviewed by our real estate technology expert? Email Craig Row at craig@inman.com

The pitch

Our **most recent technology survey** showed us that you really like your CRMs. I get it. Keeping tabs on past and present clients and managing listings are obviously paramount to earning a living in this industry.

However, you also need to oversee all the little things that sew together your transactions. This is why agents need to understand businesses management as well as they do open houses. You can't let the seams split on that next deal.

Asana is a project collaboration tool that helps teams significantly reduces dependence on email and compartmentalize critical communications. Let's check it out.

The sale

Asana is part project management solution, part team-builder. Real estate agents can easily apply its universal task-based workflows to a home sale, from initial listing down to post-closing activities.

Asana excels in its ability to keep you out of your inbox for transaction-oriented content. You'll still need to sign in to Gmail to find out when to pick up your daughter; however, if your client needs a ride to the closing, it'll be in Asana.

Rooted in task creation and project fulfillment, Asana is highly granular, enabling users to burrow into deep detail on projects and tasks. Under each task, one can add notes, attachments, assign the task and connect it to a specific project.

You can also pull in people outside the office, "organization guests." Inviting attorneys, lenders or other agents for their necessary transaction insight only enriches the team effort.

When a preclosing meeting needs to be scheduled, create the task, add the seller's best times in the comment box, assign it to the "Stark Family Sale" project and move on to the next. It takes only moments.

Asana is contemporary software rooted in the need to share with a number of people a lot of different things. Its very reason for being demands an open, engaging workspace. That is without question achieved here.

Task lists are broken down logically, and it's easy to drill down into what's most recent and pertinent.

Asana stubs its toe lightly by allowing you to set alerts for task or project updates to your "actual" inbox. I envision this impacting user adoption, given the solution's linchpin appeal of "teamwork without email."

Thankfully, users can turn off this feature and use Asana's native "Inbox" tab. Do that.

Asana's Inbox is your foyer, so to speak: the place you enter to get a feel for what's on your plate for the day. Any sort of notification will be listed and accessible, from new task attachments to a completed assignment.

I often find myself referring often to **Nekst** which used a series of preset common tasks to steer transaction management.

Asana does something similar by defining projects as a list of tasks. I suppose this is a pretty logical definition, but in this context, it augments the workflow because it keeps completion of the task and team interaction front and center.

Sometimes, great software isn't great because of the sophistication of its coding. Careful integration of user engagement practices, the actual thought process people go through when faced with assignments and chores while under the umbrella of work, is equally important to the efficacy of a solution. It's not all ones and zeros and linking to Salesforce and Facebook.

For example, we like to prioritize when given a project, so Asana gives users the ability to create sections within projects. More or less, these are headings under which the most critical tasks can be dropped.

In a real estate use case, under the "Stark Family Sale" project, staging activities would be more critical than scheduling the open house. Pretty easy stuff.

Tasks under each section can be parsed into subtasks and sent to individual team members with their own due dates, comments and notes.

Your tasks can be assigned to multiple projects and further defined by a tagging system, similar to how you use tags to expand the context of a social media post.

I'm a fan of tagging features because they bind all aspects of a project together, like an invisible swath of netting.

Asana garnishes this interconnectedness of tasks and projects with hypertext, a feature that uses the "@" symbol to reference other tasks, tags, people or projects. Yes, just like in social media. Sharp.

The close

Asana wasn't built for the real estate industry, but it sure can help you. Teams of 15 members or less can use it for free.

Asana ultimately succeeds because it makes everything within its projects, sections, tasks and subtasks easy to digest. The visual cues and formatting take great care in walking us through their respective priorities. Everything is connected and naturally organized, even in its Apple and Android mobile versions.

This software is a great example of how the real world and programming overlap. It wasn't software built for the sake of building software; it was built to do what it does: make business easier to transact through better collaboration.

Do you use Asana? What do you think? Leave a comment and let us know!

Do you have a product for our tech expert to review? Email Craig Rowe at craig@inman.com.



MARKETING, TECH REVIEWS, TECHNOLOGY

FlyerCo uses superb design and ease of use to put the fun and effectiveness back in listing fliers

A clean interface and easy-to-understand process makes this design tool a winner



by [Craig Rowe](#) on Jun 5, 2015

Have suggestions for products that you'd like to see reviewed by our real estate technology expert? Email Craig Rowe at craig@inman.com.

The pitch

If there's a marketing need in residential real estate, there's a company that will provide it. This vast, wide-open market mentality has quite a bit of good, but much more bad. It's just the nature of business.

I've seen some exceptional real estate company websites. And some have left me missing hit counters, AOL and the gurgling static buzz of dial-up modems.

The same goes with marketing collateral production tools. I know a lot of CRMs, enterprise marketing platforms and even website providers enable you to create and print listing and open house promotions, or postcards and even full-color, multi-page brochures.

As I always say though, technology that aims to do one thing well always tends to be the best at that *one* thing.

FlyerCo proves that.

The sale

I started designing on the computer in college, using Adobe PageMaker 1.0. Remember it?

I also learned Photoshop 1.0 while I had access to a scanner, color laser printer and a less-than-attentive art department supervisor.

(Why, yes, I am 21. See you guys inside!)

Anyway, it's amazing what the Internet affords us today.

FlyerCo is Web-based software that makes real estate collateral for listings, open houses and direct mail campaigns. That's pretty much it — and it's pretty great.

Visually speaking, you can't go off the reservation with a real estate flier because the property data needs to take precedence. It needs to be presented in a way that attracts eye contact to each parcel of property information.

FlyerCo's designs do exactly that — they're fresh and Web-ready. Even in instances of white space, they don't feel empty. Well done.

There are more than enough template designs for listing brochures. Currently, the postcard and open house choices are rather limited, but I was informed that many more are on the way as the company continues to grow.

Building fliers is very easy; I created one in only a few minutes with no prior copy or content ready to go. I went in blind and had zero learning curve.

To edit the starter sample text, just click on the copy block on the flier to reveal the edit menu on the side of your browser. Simply type your descriptions and features, choose a font, color, size and move on.

Text boxes actually work quite similarly to more advanced page layout software. Click on a block of copy and a dynamic frame appears that can be pulled, pushed and stretched to accommodate your type volume. The text reacts to however you adjust it. You can also just drag the text box to another spot on the page.

Property imagery can be uploaded quickly from your local drives to the FlyerCo library. These interfaces are bold and simple to interact with, requiring no advanced technical knowledge. You do more work to post to Facebook.



Images can be nudged around in their frames by a pop-up menu of arrows. And if you really screw up something, FlyerCo has a multistep undo feature. And a redo.

Speaking of which, your FlyerCo project can be quickly sent to a number of social media profiles for instant promotion. Or, just email or copy the link.

I like that upon initial account creation, FlyerCo asks you for your basic contact information and a headshot. Each flier you create will automatically embed this contact data so you don't have to recreate it every time. It's a nice touch of efficiency.

Another very thoughtful and highly beneficial feature is FlyerCo's auto-alignment guides. Grab a text box or picture and green border lines flash on screen, allowing you to put adjacent graphics on the same vertical or horizontal planes.

True graphic designers work on a grid, carefully positioning visual elements on a page in such a way as to provide balance and organization of information. That may look like the random placement of stuff in a layout is often calculated and very deliberate.

If you were to watch a true designer at work, using this grid, an entirely new appreciation for the skill of graphic designs would emerge.

Administratively, from creating an account to starting my first flier, the process took no more than three minutes — if that.

All of your fliers are listed for you upon login, and if you like a particular design, just duplicate it and insert the appropriate information.

The close

There isn't anything complicated here, just really engaging design software for real estate marketing.

Admin teams and even the most seasoned agent can have fun creating the materials that sell their homes. And I was told by management that there's a lot more on the way for FlyerCo.

FlyerCo is the **Canva** for listing fliers: good-looking, easy to use and shareable.

Thumbs up.

Do you use FlyerCo? What do you think? Leave a comment and let us know!

Do you have a product for our tech expert to review? Email Craig Rowe at craig@inman.com.



TECH REVIEWS, TECHNOLOGY

Pipeline ROI is marketing-savvy and real estate-focused

Give this multi-use tool your attention



by [Craig Rowe](#) on Jun 8, 2015

Have suggestions for products that you'd like to see reviewed by our real estate technology expert? Email Craig Rowe at craig@inman.com.

The pitch

A few months after I launched a website for a rural land broker, I received a rather frustrated message about its lack of traffic.

Not quite appreciating the joke I made about it being a website for rural land and that I thought a lack of traffic was the point, the dialogue came back around to why he wasn't getting more leads.

I reminded him that he paid me to manage the site's construction and write it, not generate leads. He didn't quite know what to make of my response.

What my previous client didn't understand was the concept of inbound marketing. Thankfully for the real estate industry, **Pipeline ROI** has a pretty firm grasp of it.

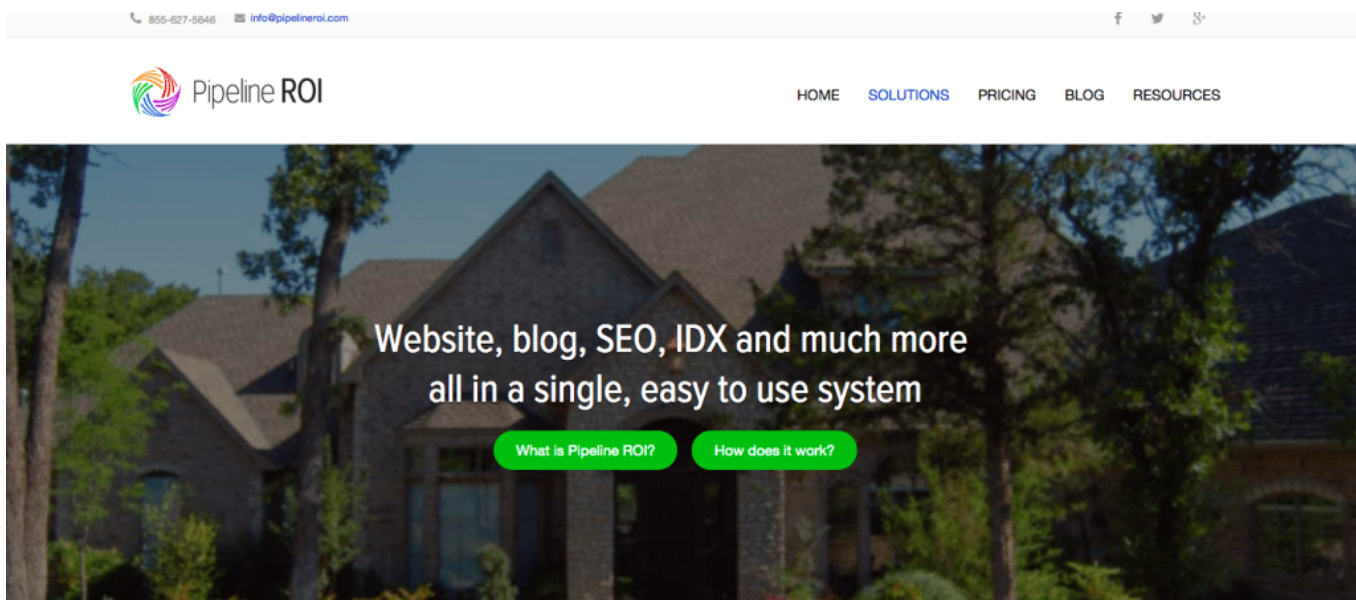
The sale

I know that I often say that a solution that tries to solve everything usually isn't the solution for anything.

I'm willing to admit that in this case, and in keeping with my opening, that dog doesn't hunt.

Pipeline ROI is as comprehensive a real estate marketing platform as I've seen in this space.

Beyond just covering all the bases, it does it with some real sophisticated marketing measurement tools, a sleek, intriguing user interface and a lead-tracking functionality often reserved for stand-alone CRMs.



You can build a website with Pipeline ROI and then market the heck out of it, all from a single login. And then do even more.

There are a couple of minor drawbacks, like a lack of advanced social media campaign scheduling and management, or a system for building display ads.

To clarify: I think that if a solution is going to tackle so many components of the Internet marketing machine, the absence of this feature stands out a little.

Like I said, though: minor drawbacks.

Pipeline ROI gives agents a tremendous array of sources from which to capture leads with landings pages, connections to the major portals (as well as more than 100 other real estate sites), e-books, emailed listings and, thankfully, your own listing pages.

Subject: [Customize URL](#)

Buying your first home in Naples

Tags: First Time Buyers, Category: buying

Body:

It's a great venture to buy your first house. Of course with the excitement are also some butterflies. You'll definitely want an agent looking out for your highest interests, and you'll probably want some expert direction along the way. I am absolutely trained and qualified in Naples real estate, and would love to provide assistance with purchasing your first house.

Naples Listings

Not all REALTORS® are equally able to help you find a home. My dedication to you, my client, is what sets me apart. When you hire Metro Properties to help with your first home purchase, here's what you can expect:

The process of purchasing a house has many different twists and turns. I'll be there for everything from locating the right home among all the houses available in Naples, to providing guidance on closing costs and everything in between. I'll assist you with characterizing your shopping list of features that you want in your home, your community, and your school district.

Design <> HTML Preview Words: 268 Characters: 1506

Save as Draft Submit Post

As a content writer, I can attest to the value of a solution that quickly rewords your social media posts for repeat sends. It gets tedious trying to find new ways to nourish Twitter phrases like “This house has a sweet man cave.”

Pipeline ROI’s “Ghost It” technology automatically creates alternative versions to keep the posts fresh and engaging. It’s really cool.

Although it’s not custom programmed from the foundation up, Pipeline ROI’s sites address mobile responsiveness better than most, with self-adjusting menus and visual elements that collapse according to screen size.

The sites are ultimately content delivery vehicles, not necessarily customer-focused branding platforms. If you’re comfortable with that, you’ll be more than happy with Pipeline ROI site. Leads are the name of the game, after all, and they do that very well.



Perhaps Pipeline ROI's most surprising feature is its lead generation analysis tools. Since the solution lets you tightly measure the source of every lead, whether from your e-book landing page or a realtor.com form, it's easy to determine the value of your marketing dollars spend.



For example, if your portal leads are weak for a couple of months, that doesn't mean you just pull the plug on that ad budget. Maybe your message isn't hitting the mark, so adjust it, test and remeasure. These are the types of decisions in-depth marketing metrics empower you to make.

Pipeline ROI neatly sorts your lead generation and activity data into big, bold graphs and readable layouts. The company somehow made the most boring (but most critical) aspect of marketing fun to use.

Metrics for Last Week [Show/Hide Filters](#)

Time Frame	Details	Subject
<input checked="" type="radio"/> Last Week <input type="radio"/> From: <input type="text"/> To: <input type="text"/>	Source: All Sources Lead Type: All Types Location: All Locations Creator: All Leads	All Hunter Sandberg Jeff Wiggum Paul Michaels Sandra Keller Select All Clear All
Price Range From: Any To: Any		Reset All Apply Filters

Maybe I'm being a bit too effusive in my praise for Pipeline ROI. I confess: I'm psyched to see a real estate software company stress the importance of content marketing.

I worry that Pipeline ROI is providing a bit too much of the content for you, because I'm an advocate for original copy and content.

Most importantly, I'm happy that Pipeline ROI is telling agents that if you want to get good leads, you need give your audience good information.

The close

Pipeline ROI is a super sharp marketing platform. Social media marketing. Listing pages. Landing pages. Lead oversight. It's all in there.

I would encourage users to make as much new, fresh content as possible. The Internet needs that. Video record your open houses, talk about a sale that fell apart; whatever you do each day is marketable content. Be authentic to your audience, give them the truth.

Then use it to make money with Pipeline ROI.

Do you use Pipeline ROI? What do you think? Leave a comment and let us know!

Do you have a product for our tech expert to review? Email Craig Rowe at craig@inman.com.



MLS, TECH REVIEWS, TECHNOLOGY

Pocketlist.co is organizing pocket listing market for SF Bay Area agents

A movement is afoot that could revolutionize



by [Craig Rowe](#) on Jun 9, 2015

Have suggestions for products that you'd like to see reviewed by our real estate technology expert? Email Craig Rowe at craig@inman.com.

The pitch

I think there's a movement afoot.

A movement driven by the flow of available real estate information, one that may eventually see the flow of portal listings slowly ebb, like the hundreds of thousands of gallons of public water that evaporate annually from Nevada's infamous Lake Mead.

The evidence is already there, like the stark, 100-foot-high band of mineral-stained red rock that marks where the lake's waters once flowed. Buyers and sellers are outrunning agents to your data. They have more power than ever before.

Smartly, some agents have already started stockpiling alternative marketing strategies. Some agents don't put listings in the public marketplace anymore.

In the San Francisco Bay Area, an ever-growing cache of properties are being marketed privately on a website called **Pocketlist.co**.

Is this where the market is headed?

The sale

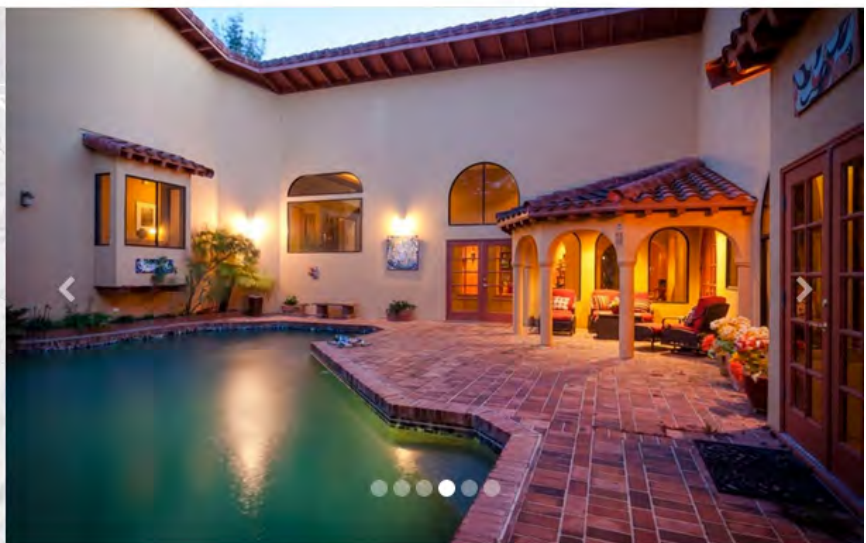
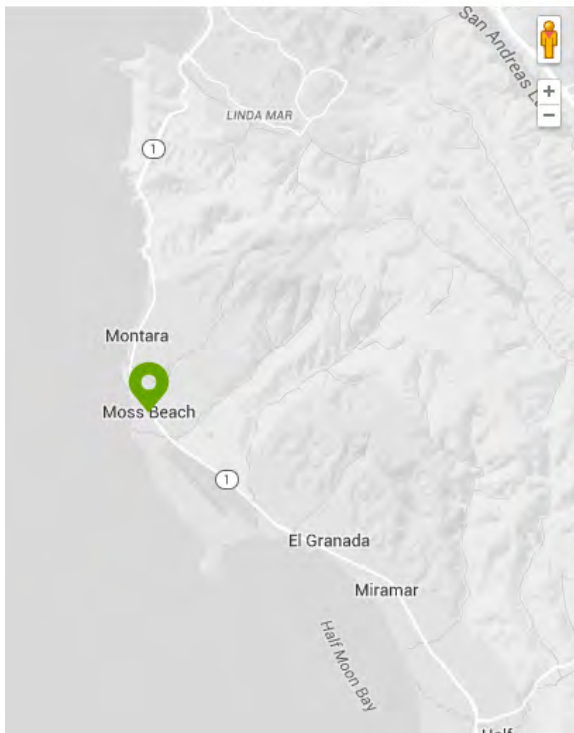
The time-honored strategy of broadcasting a listing to as wide a swath of the market as possible to bag just a single buyer, like a gatling gun in a zoo, may be waning a bit.

As real estate grows ever hyperlocal and agents' collective disenfranchisement with the data-selling tactics and growing industry power of the portals surges, real estate consumers and agents alike will respond like any other social demographic would when faced with a need for change: They'll find a new way.

Pocketlist is organizing the pocket listing market.

A single-site exchange for private listings, Pocketlist listings can't be on the MLS or any other online portal.

According to the website's founders, one-quarter to one-third of all Bay Area listings exchange hands without ever seeing the open market.



Home > Stunning Moss Beach Estate

Stunning Moss Beach Estate

\$3,390,000 **FOR SALE**

SINGLE FAMILY HOME

❤️ 1 🌐 53 💬 0

When agents work with sellers who don't want trails of unqualified buyers traipsing through their homes, a listing agent registers with Pocketlist and creates a listing page.

All properties on Pocketlist are behind the registration wall, and buyers who want to browse are prequalified by Pocketlist representatives through a process that includes a phone interview, a prequalification letter, and extensive vetting via online profiles.

An individual seller can also register on Pocketlist to post their home. If they need an agent or advice along the way, Pocketlist has a network of proven agents to connect with sellers.

No listing on Pocketlist has an address posted, just a general geographic area or neighborhood, such as "Bernal Heights Two Bedroom," "Pacific Heights Mansion," or "Sausalito 4-Unit Property."

Obviously, Pocketlist properties do not show up on search engines. Nor is the scar of "days on market" even remotely evident. Since private buyers tend to move in and out of the market quickly, the odds are slim they'll notice a Pocketlist listing that's been hanging around a while.





 [Home](#) > [Sausalito 4-Unit Property](#)

Sausalito 4-Unit Property

\$3,750,000 FOR SALE

2-4 UNITS

 0  2  0

While exclusivity is clearly the prevailing sentiment here, Pocketlist's founders are quick to point out they do not intend the site to serve only high-end listings. The Bay Area's real estate market simply happens to have the nation's most active pocket listing market.

Pocketlist doubters will argue that its service won't inspire competition among buyers. I argue that it's the illusion of competition that matters; in fact, that's all the public market offers as well. Illusion. No buyer actually sees a competing offer, just random faces at an open house.

Moreover, real estate agents work hard to develop professional networks, from the best attorneys to other accomplished agents. What power does that network have when a listing is delivered to the public via every means of outreach possible?

Why cultivate “spheres of influence” if you’re going to go outside the circle?

Pocketlist.co will certainly have its share of tire-kickers. Even well-qualified buyers can take their time, or see a house and not like it. They can mark favorite properties on the site and a list of possibilities.

The advantage to agents is working within a much smaller, more qualified micromarket. It also doesn’t hurt to test a listing’s value to the private market for a short period of time before expanding it to the wider marketplace.

Pocketlist.co looks better than the portal sites and its listing pages are beautifully minimal, giving browsers just enough to ask for more.

The site has been live for a little more than a month, and the future calls for more markets and additional functionality for registered buyers.

The close

Clearly, most private listings are luxury homes. But price doesn’t always denote luxury, especially in the Bay Area. Agents in the region who dwell in these markets would be smart to leverage this service as a way to sell their client on the idea of exclusivity.

I believe that listings in the median sales price range of a market could benefit from being marketed to a more compressed buying audience. Will private listing websites by ZIP code, neighborhood or even street name rise from the depths of Zillow.com and realtor.com?

Time will tell.

Until then, there’s Pocketlist.co.

Do you use Pocketlist.co? What do you think? Leave a comment and let us know!

Do you have a product for our tech expert to review? Email Craig Rowe at craig@inman.com.



TECH REVIEWS, TECHNOLOGY

CamScanner is a surprisingly feature-rich scanner app for mobile devices

It's quick to learn, affordable and intelligent



by [Craig Rowe](#) on Jun 9, 2015

The pitch

I don't believe in going green.

More specifically, it's the term I despise, not its inherent meaning. I think it carries little weight; it's not at all specific. How are you "going green"? Are you protesting outside palm oil processors?

Usually, it just means you placed a recycle bin in your copy room and stopped buying bottled water. One thing I like about **CamScanner** is that it's not trying to sell me on the antiquated notion of "going green" by making documents digital. It's just focusing on making work easier to handle.

The sale

Despite a great deal of momentum in the digital transaction space, real estate still loves its paperwork.

Apps like CamScanner can go a long way toward helping the industry reduce the remaining tonnage of physical documents that buying and selling homes requires.

Like any other scanning app, CamScanner captures a document using your mobile device camera. It asks if you want to use the flash, if it's a single page or batch scan, and lets you adjust the zoom with a touch slider. Pretty basic stuff.

However, after the scan, the cool starts.

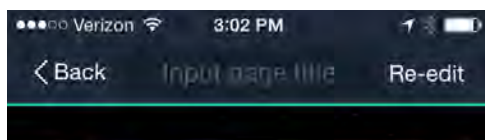
Anything captured with CamScanner is easy to mark up for sharing with colleagues, either via notes or a pen tool.

You can adjust your pen size before circling or highlighting, and when you fat-finger over the good stuff, use the Undo or Eraser features. Just like the real thing.

Adding notes to documents or individual pages is equally easy to do by tapping the Note icon.

An especially cool component to the note function is that notes you add to a scanned document are visible when emailed and opened on a desktop version of Acrobat.

Multipage scanning is especially useful for scanning contracts or representation agreements.



After scanning a listing agreement, users can save it in a CamScanner album, and then send it as a PDF to DocuSign or **Acrobat DC** for digital signatures.

to Trail: **Bright Angel** Trail to Herm

Dynamic interplay of soft and hard layers of stone created an open be the Tonto Platform. Easily visible from several South Rim overlooks, an obvious exception to the striking vertical cliffs that characterize much of this natural transcanon route for 95 rough, unmaintained miles, from the west. All of this makes the Tonto Trail unique among Grand Canyon trails towards the Colorado River, but the Tonto Trail offers passage by use of the river. Because of its length, most hikers approach the Tonto Trail in series of installments, breaking the route down into four or five sections. The lay of the land. A notable lack of reliable water makes most of the route a proposition, but the section between **Bright Angel** and Monument Creek, BL7 (2995 ft / 913 m) to Hermit trailhead: as hikers can count on. As a result, the section of the Tonto Trail is here along the trail, and it is here that most hikers get their first experience at transcanon.

Locations/Elevations
Bright Angel trailhead (6860 ft / 2091 m) to Indian Garden, CIG (3800 ft / 1160 m) to Horn Creek, BL4 (3550 ft / 1082 m) to Salt Creek, BL5 (3550 ft / 1082 m) to Monument Creek, BL7 (2995 ft / 913 m) to Hermit trailhead: Monument Creek, BL7 (2995 ft / 913 m) to Hermit Creek, BM7 (2995 ft / 913 m) to Hermit trailhead (6700 ft / 2043 m):

Maps
7.5 Minute Grand Canyon Quad (USGS)
Illustrated Map, Grand Canyon National Park (National Geographic)
Sky Terrain Map, Grand Canyon (Sky Terrain)

Sources
Purified water is available at Indian Garden. Occasionally water is available at Hermit Creek, Indian Garden, and Salt Creek.



Document management systems, the software industry silo into which you could place CamScanner, isn't just about reducing paper. It's really about improving business processes. Inherent to that is the reduction of email, or at least the consolidation of it.

To that end, CamScanner has smartly teamed with each of the common, consumer-level placeholders of this world: Box.net, Dropbox, Evernote, Google Drive and OneDrive.

The premium version allows for automatic uploads of scanned documents to each, a nice bit of process efficiency. Even better, and also available on the free version, is the Send Files to Computer option.

Turned on, this feature provides a unique numeric URL at which all of your scans are available for download. This setup option is hidden under General Settings > Doc Export menu. Find it, use it.

Free accounts get up to 200 MB of CamScanner cloud storage, which is plenty considering how many options users are provided to share, send and upload.

I found the OCR (optical character recognition) functionality to be somewhat lacking, but it did capture enough for me to successfully find three different search terms within a document.

Disclaimer: The documents I scanned were pulled from deep within the recycle bin, and I think one had a chicken salad stain on it.

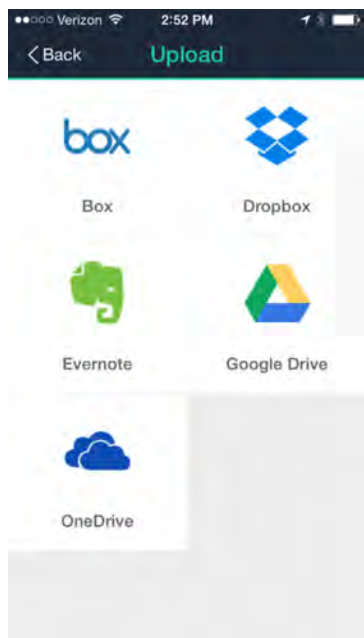
Free account holders can invite up to 10 people to collaborate on a document, paid users can party with 50.

I'm not psyched that collaborators have to register, but if you can convince them to, the process is easy.

Overall, CamScanner's user interface is sleek and obvious; I didn't have to open the "getting started" email. After a couple of misses, I was a CamScanning fool.

There are several sorting options for when your digital documents pile up, and if you apply OCR to any of them, you can search all of your documents directly from the main menu.

Other useful stuff includes a watermark tool, social network sharing, printing and for you stalwarts, there's even a faxing feature. However, it's up to you to figure out if someone will answer it.



The close

There are countless uses for scanned documents, the best of which deal with making business a little easier to manage.

If you have a piece of paper on your desk, ask yourself if there's any compelling reason for it to exist. If there isn't, you could probably benefit from software like CamScanner.

This is quick to learn, affordable and intelligent — everything an app should be.



THE DAILY REAL ESTATE

TECH REVIEW:

CRMs

TECH REVIEWS, TECHNOLOGY

Some thoughts about CRMs and how you use them

Inman's tech expert tackles our extensive CRM survey



by [Craig Rowe](#) on Jun 11, 2015

Have suggestions for products that you'd like to see reviewed by our real estate technology expert? Email Craig Rowe at craig@inman.com.

The pitch

I'm often asked my opinion about a specific CRM, or whether I'll review this product or that product. I take them all down, and mark them for future columns.

In terms of recommending a CRM? I don't want to do that.

Choosing enterprise software for your office is about so much more than features and usability, or who else is using it or likes it.

Office structure, user interest, company growth plans and countless other operational facets of your office factor in to the effectiveness of a CRM.

Last week, Inman published an **extensive reader survey** about customer relationship management systems.

The results were really fun to peruse, revealing quite a bit about how you use and choose these software packages.

Naturally, I came away with a few thoughts.

The sale

I noticed that CRMs are mainly the domain of larger real estate offices.

Clearly affordability is an issue, as most are high-ticket items and agents at brokerages with 20 or more agents can swing the stiff dues, because big agencies typically have the marketing dollars to attract the business. More agents means more contacts, transactions, projects and data to control and compartmentalize.

However, broker-provided CRMs are not the norm, which I think is fantastic. It's a great sign to see individual agents jumping both feet into large technology commitments. You are your own business, after all, and you need software to run it.

I do hope that smaller firms don't overextend themselves trying to keep up with this tech train. There are a lot of very effective products out there doing great things for more local teams.

The majority of survey respondents reported that "contact management" was the most important feature in the selection of their CRM. Intriguing.

That means a lot of you are paying significant amounts of money (up to \$26,400/year) for something your mobile device can do for you.

Next time you conduct your due diligence for CRM, assume that contact management is a given, like tires on a new car. Sure, you're interested in their quality, but you can safely assume they'll be inflated and will rotate when you push the accelerator.

I noticed the majority of agents choose a CRM that was built specifically for real estate. I think there's real value, at least during the analysis of potential vendors, that real estate companies consider products not built specifically for the industry.

Software built from the blending of disparate industry sales tactics can really benefit its users. It can offer agents a competitive advantage, simply by the nature of it not being the same system the majority of your market is using.

Remember, CRM companies are competing with each other, too. They want to be better than what else is out there.

I guess what I'm saying is to not just accept a product as the industry standard. Look outside the property lines for creative solutions and alternatives, you may find a feature that could further define your level of service to your current and most importantly, future clients.

To that end, I want to call out a couple of quotes from the survey that indicate just how disparate the views are on the industry's more popular solutions. And because the first one is funny.

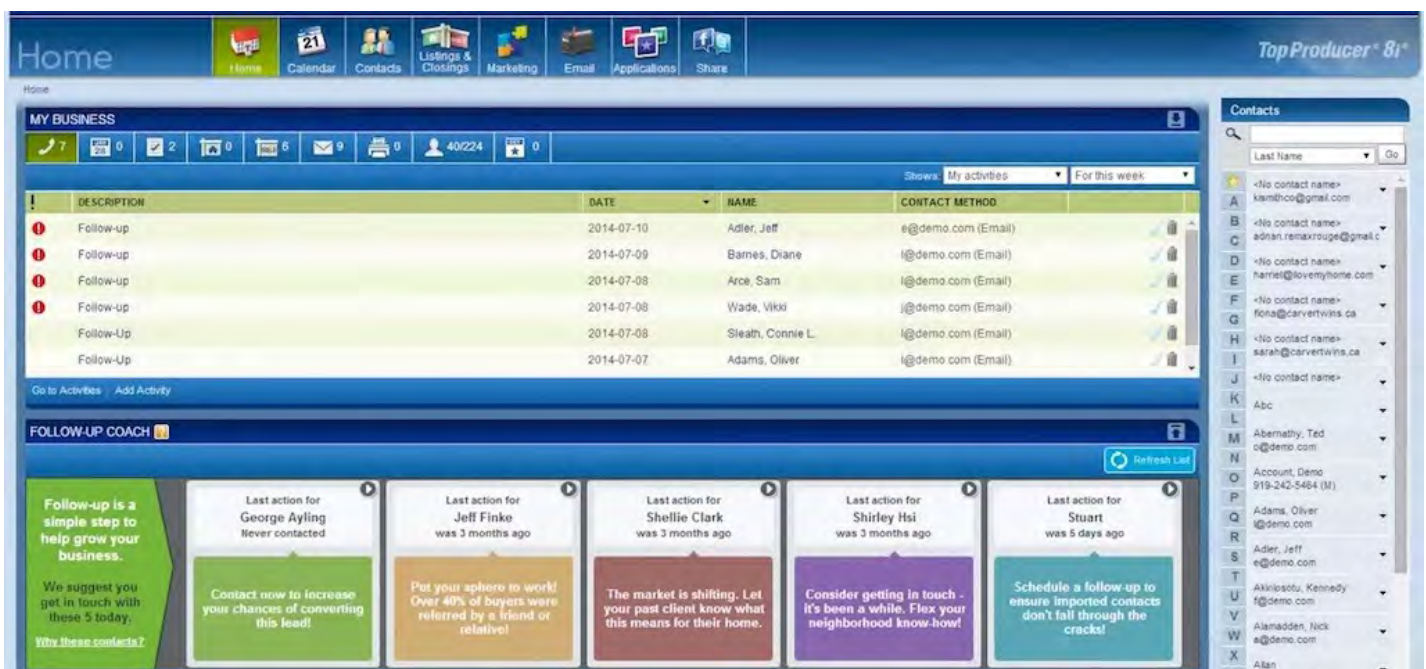
This, about TopProducer:

"It's crap," said another. "Reports are inadequate, activities and contact modules do not integrate adequately — cannot even do simple, common tasks such as filter a call list and download or print it out. Most tasks take 6-8 clicks to search, open a lead and update it. Seriously?? What is this, 1987?"

(Well, you are wanting to print your call list.)

And another:

"Trying to like Top Producer, but it's complicated," said a fourth.



A Top Producer screenshot.

However, almost 40 percent of respondents ranked Top Producer an 8, 9 or 10 on a scale of 1 to 10. So how hard is it, really?

Has everyone invested the time to learn it?

Relative to that, the survey revealed some sentiments that worry me a little, primarily that a few respondents are adamant about their CRM being an expense, not an investment. That approach is why, in many cases, software gets neglected. Or is considered hard to use.

Some software is an expense, like systems to answer phones, office security or your accounting systems. Those are costs of doing business.

Customer relationship management solutions are unique in that they only work when you work.

If you're going to invest the soft costs in setting one up, onboarding your contacts and learning to leverage its features, you should do so with the understanding that it's a long-term relationship. Software can grow with you — if you allow it to. Databases need time to flourish; primarily, they need data.

Also, CRMs are not mandatory for success. You don't need one to be good at selling real estate. If you choose to purchase one, it's a want. And you need to want to make it work for you.

Thus, if you adjust your approach to considering a CRM an investment, its presence will have a much greater impact on your workflow.

The close

Thank you to everyone who took the time to respond to our CRM survey. It's extremely helpful for us to understand what concerns our readers.

Like a CRM, our writers and editors and designers and content specialists can't apply our collective industry insight and expertise without your feedback, without your data.

We've all made an investment in making Inman the highest-quality real estate news destination on the Internet. These surveys help us keep that effort moving.

Thanks again.



THE DAILY REAL ESTATE

TECH

REVIEW:

PERSONAL SAFETY APPS

TECH REVIEWS, TECHNOLOGY

Personal safety apps and services should be on every agent's smartphone home screen

Here are 3 to keep you safe in your work and personal life



by [Craig Rowe](#) on Jun 12, 2015

The pitch

Selling owner-operated investment property can put you in a lot of uncomfortable situations.

Not only did we often have to tour homes in severe states of disarray, some of them were in neighborhoods that went years without being recognized for their hospitality.

In those instances, we were probably better off than most, as we were often a group of three or four guys, not really an ideal target for any scheming malefactors.

Unfortunately, last week a man in Tampa robbed two real estate agents in the same day, with a handgun, in violent and frightening scenarios. Each time, he posed as a buyer, and police believe he's made calls to a number of other agents, too. Very scary stuff.

As of this writing, he remains at large.

Thus, I thought it worthwhile to write about a few emergency alert apps. And in the interest of industry safety, these are already well-reviewed and proven. Just pick one.

The sale

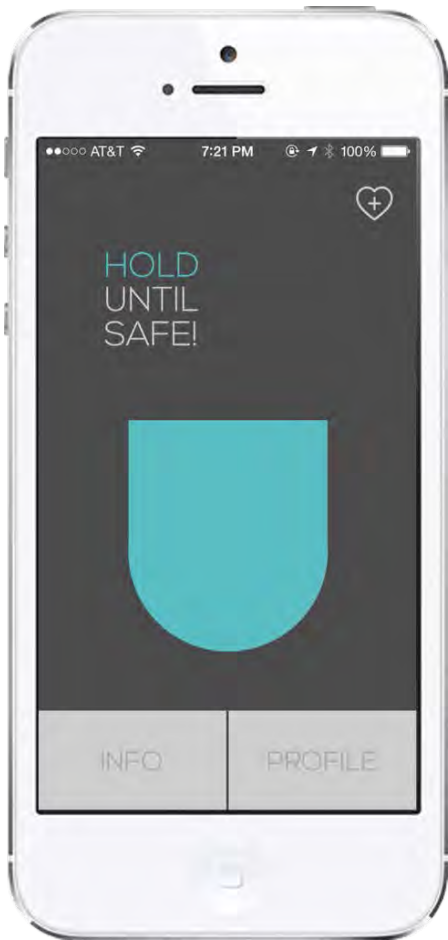
Safety Alert Apps: WatchMe 911

This company makes a few different emergency alert products for your smartphone, each applying to unique environments. One is for employees and educators in larger office and work situations, while another is targeted at college campuses.

WatchMe 911 was designed for "working women and moms," but clearly men can leverage its features, too. This app has a number of different ways for you to get help, and each uses a preprogrammed list of contacts and, when necessary, an automatic call to 911.

The Panic feature can be turned on if you're feeling at all unsafe, and with two quick taps, your phone sounds an alert and 911 is dialed.





The Monitor Me function uses a timer that, if not shut off before its culmination, will alert a list of emergency contacts, your selected “Safety Team,” to your whereabouts.

SafeTrek

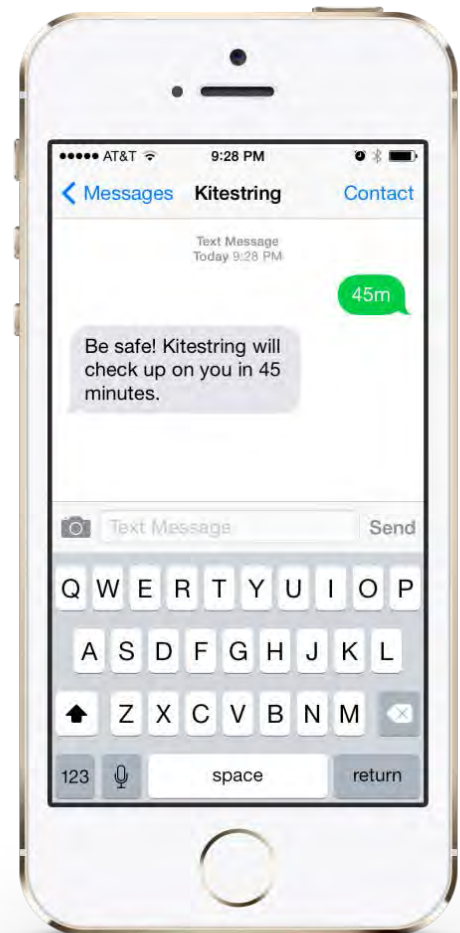
This app is as simple as it gets. When launched, users are presented with a bold, green icon on which to place their thumb during any potentially unsafe situations.

If, after removing your thumb, a PIN isn’t entered, police are alerted and dispatched to your location. When everything is fine, enter your PIN and carry on and sell the house.

Kitestring

This isn’t an app. Rather, Kitestring is a text-based personal safety service. It also uses a timer method that asks users via text message if they’re OK after an arranged time.

For example, when I leaving to show a house, simply text “60m” to your custom Kitestring number. At the limit, you’ll get an automated “check-in” text. Respond positively, and the service cancels itself for that trip.



If you don't respond, a list of emergency contacts is notified about your situation. If everything is cool but you'll be late, and still want Kitestring to stay connected, send an update of "20m" or "45m" to reset the alert.

The close

Like the vicious nature of people who want to leverage the independence of real estate agents against them, every personal alert app will have a drawback or two. The products here are purposefully simple so you can set them up and react with as little thought as possible.

The timer systems are probably the most useful because if something happens suddenly, your phone gets stolen or deliberately destroyed, people will still be alerted.

Please, continue to consider your safety when in the field, regardless of how critical it is that a listing sells. Be wary of showings at homes with "buyers" who seem hesitant to share personal information or who "just drove by." It's OK to be cynical sometimes.

Be safe out there.

What personal safety apps — and what do you think? Leave a comment and let us know!

Do you have a product for our tech expert to review? Email Craig Rowe at craig@inman.com.



TECH REVIEWS, TECHNOLOGY

Fast Forward Stories will speed up your Web traffic with simple, effective video content

This video marketing platform makes good sense for your real estate business



by [Craig Rowe](#) on Jun 16, 2015

Have suggestions for products that you'd like to see reviewed by our real estate technology expert? Email Craig Rowe at craig@inman.com.

The pitch

I found out all I needed to know about video content marketing while leading a trip in the Grand Canyon a few years ago.

Camped at Indian Garden, a one-time farming settlement for the Havasupai tribe 4.5 miles below what is now the tourist-saturated Grand Canyon Village, a college-aged guest remarked, "I had no idea there would be this many trees and greenery down here. I looked for video of our campsites on your company's website and didn't find anything."

While I don't guide for that particular company anymore, I walked away understanding that if you want to gain traction in the rocky world of real estate Web marketing, you better use video. (If a 20-year-old makes a remark about business and the Internet, it's wise to listen.)

I'm not sure if it took a tech-savvy college sophomore or a trip to a mile-deep crack in the Earth, but **Fast Forward Stories** understands very well the power video marketing has on curious consumers. And it applies that knowledge directly to the real estate industry.

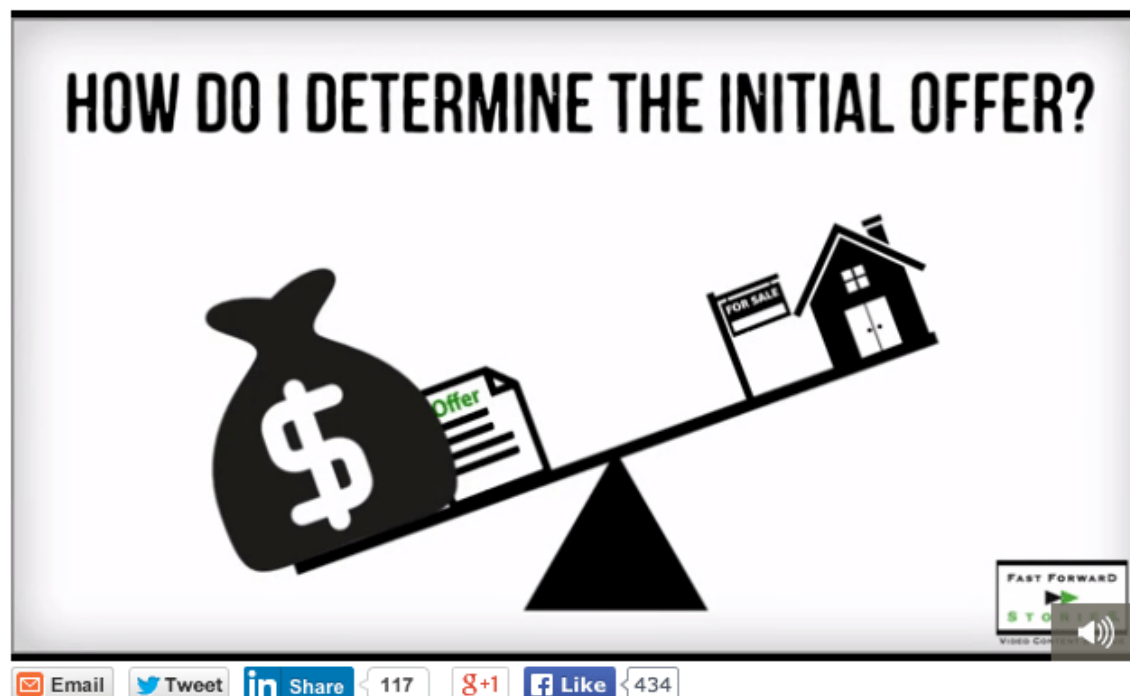
The sale

Fast Forward Stories employs a practical but proven methodology in creating its video library.

The offerings aren't overly produced bus bench commercials. Rather, they are clinical and direct — and thus highly effective.

Each video leverages a "whiteboard" tactic to quickly address its subject question; such as, "Is An Older Home A Better Value Than A New One?" or "How Do I Choose The Best Loan Program For Me?"

If your office doesn't have a whiteboard in its conference room, get one. It's the simplest form of communication for group messaging and throughout the world's technology companies, it's even become a verb: "We need to whiteboard this." "Let's do some whiteboarding to capture these ideas."



A whiteboard is essentially a big Post-it note, but the beauty of those little yellow sticky notes is their intrinsic mandate of brevity, not the reusable strip of tacky backing. Fast Forward Stories answers real estate challenges in this way.

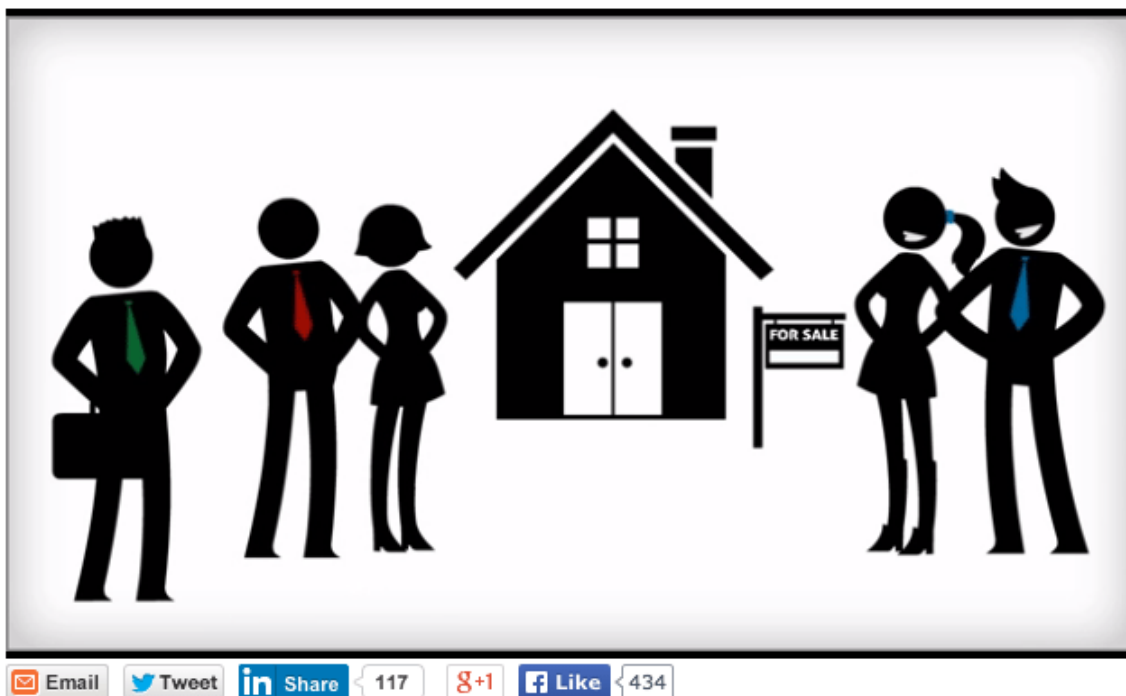
Fast Forward Stories subscribers are awarded such an array of video content that I find it hard to believe they would ever exhaust even a fraction of the selection. However, the point to the depth of its library isn't to overpopulate or inundate — it's to ensure content specificity.

You see, content marketing isn't just about providing a lot of content. It's about providing *quality* content. Inherent to that quality is the ability to answer a website visitor's question in under than a few clicks.

The stick figure characters and absence of dynamic color schemes that characterize Fast Forward Stories' explainers is a deliberate tactic to put substance over style, to whiteboard the solution.

If your website can answer a prospective homebuyer's question in under two minutes while keeping them at arm's length, you'll win the Internet. That's what these videos can help you do.

Fast Forward Stories supplies a large number of videos that address an ever-narrowing number of topics under the following industry categories: *Starting, Finding, Selecting, Going to Market, Sales Process, Financing, Mortgages, New Homes, Credit, Federal Programs, VA Loans, and Title and Closing.*



The prevailing sense of simplicity in the content is carried over into its technical application. Embedding your videos into websites, social media sharing and emailing them can be done in a minimal number of steps.

WordPress integration is made simple with common embed features that anyone who's used Microsoft Word could manage, as is sending videos via email. You don't need a WordPress site to use Fast Forward Stories because good code is good code; it can be inserted into just about any content management system.

Fast Forward Stories has partnerships with a number of the major email marketing clients, generating quick code snippets that can be easily pasted into your templates.

Agents can brand each video with some custom language and logos to appear at the beginning and end of a video, along with a call-to-action screen. Basic and effective.

You can also apply a grayscale silhouette of your city to a video, provided you're in or associated with one of the 50 major markets currently offered.

Content marketing is highly valuable in that it's clearly measurable; it allows content managers to know exactly what interests website users.

Fast Forward Stories supplies a robust metrics tool that allows users insight into what's compelling buyers and sellers to click, share, and download.

HOW CAN I DETERMINE MY HOUSING NEEDS BEFORE I BEGIN THE SEARCH?

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Measurement is key. With it, you can justify marketing decisions, better target prospects, and generate audience profiles. Maybe your Fast Forward Stories video traffic will show you get a large number of first-time buyers to your site, or people wanting new homes.

Using that Web-generated wisdom, you can alter the homes you seek for listing or consider offering first-time buyer courses.

As video grows into a tentpole Web marketing asset, expect more measurement capabilities to emerge. You'll want to be in front of this trend.

The close

Normally, I have a hard time getting behind visually ordinary content production.

The direct, answer-first strategy of Fast Forward Stories has given me reason to reconsider. You can do what they do only if you do it right.

The stock, sometimes too-serious soundtracks can be distracting when backing certain subject matter, but not to such an extent as to hamper the efficacy of the message.

In the era of competition for smartphone screen space, which demands from software developers an extreme focus on interface and visual ergonomics, often to a fault, this product stands out for its practicality.

If you're seeking a technically simple and industry-knowledgeable way to build website traffic and increase the value of what's in your CRM, I think Fast Forward Stories is one of the industry's better video content options.

What personal safety apps — and what do you think? Leave a comment and let us know!

Do you have a product for our tech expert to review? Email Craig Rowe at craig@inman.com.