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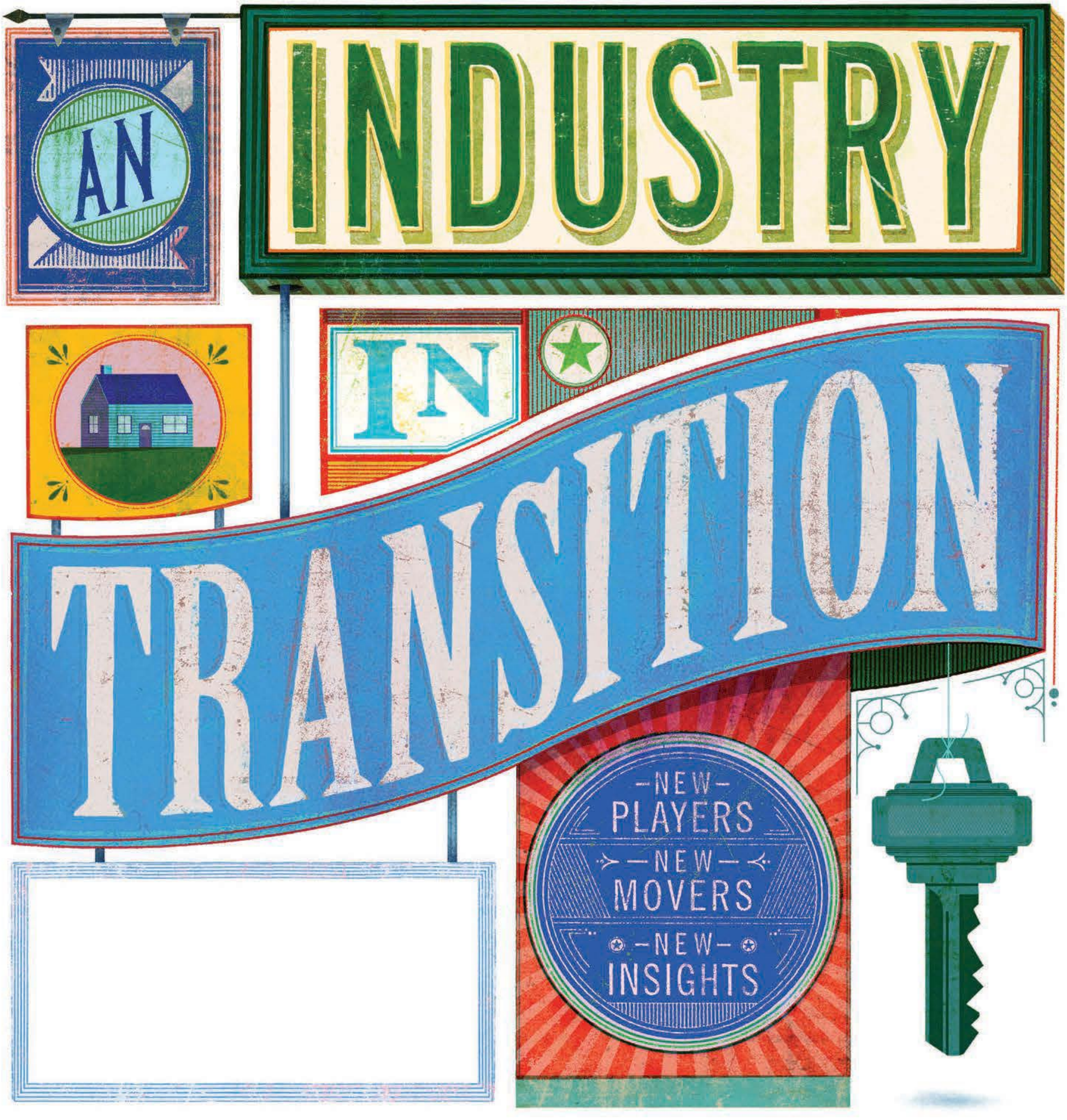


C.A.R. CELEBRATES

110

WE KEEP TRACK OF THE **DATA AND TRENDS** THAT SHAPE THE HOUSING MARKET

California homeownership was 46.3% in 1900 and rose to 54.3% in 2013

SOURCE: U.S. CENSUS BUREAU

Homeownership rate for 18-34 year olds fell to a record 13.2% in 2014 during the Great Recession

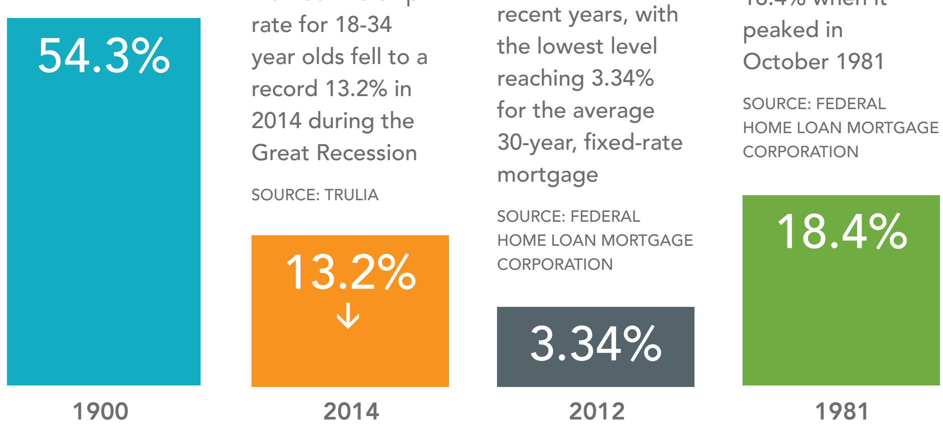
SOURCE: TRULIA

Mortgage rates have remained at record lows in recent years, with the lowest level reaching 3.34% for the average 30-year, fixed-rate mortgage

SOURCE: FEDERAL HOME LOAN MORTGAGE CORPORATION

The average 30-year, fixed-rate mortgage was 18.4% when it peaked in October 1981

SOURCE: FEDERAL HOME LOAN MORTGAGE CORPORATION



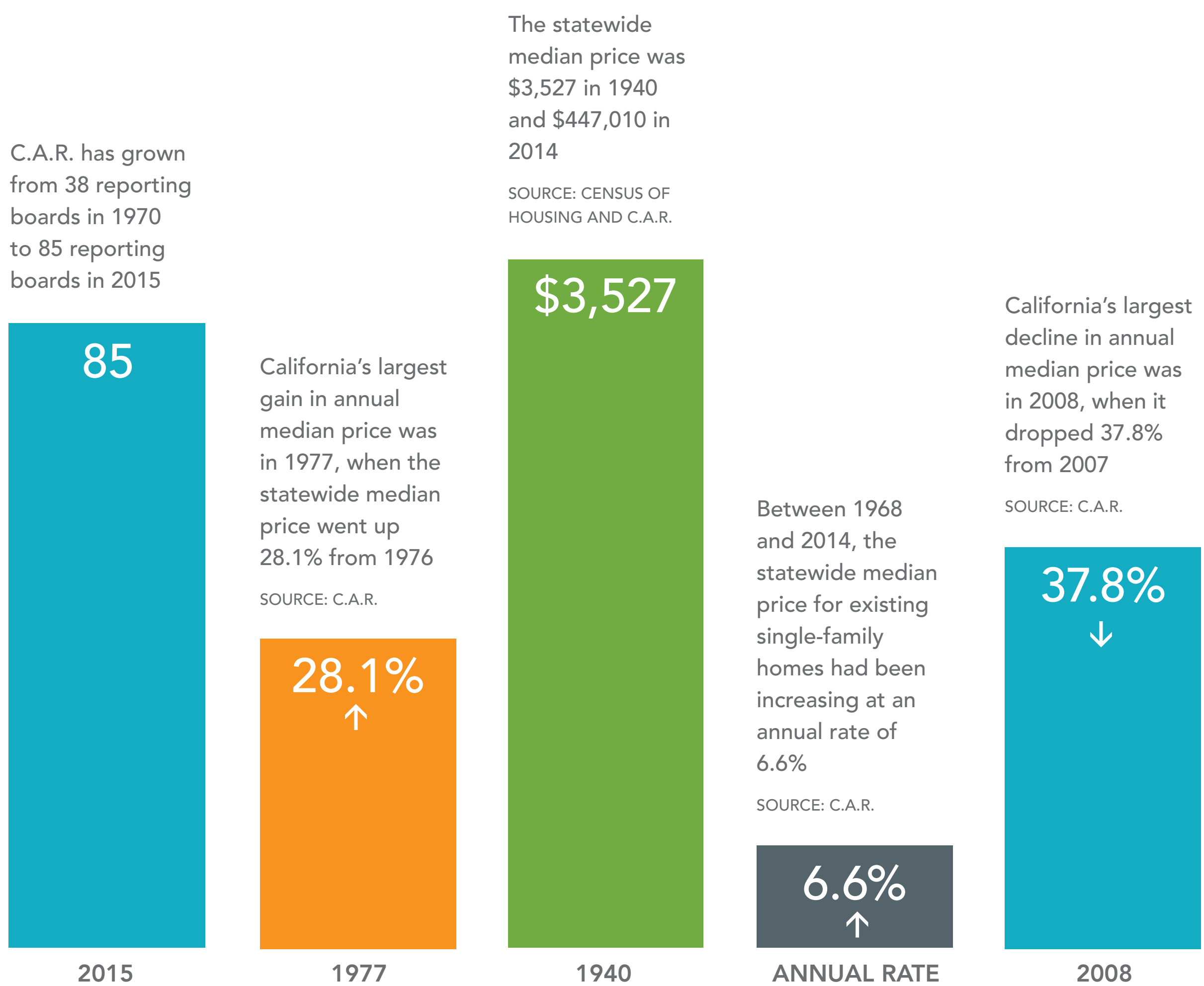
110 1905-2015

CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS®

LEADING THE WAY... FOR 110 YEARS™

110 YEARS IN CALIFORNIA REAL ESTATE

A snapshot of some notable moments in economic and market data history



PRESIDENT'S FORUM

Embracing Change in Real Estate

The vast majority of buyers now use the Internet to search for a home, according to C.A.R.'s 2015 Home Buyer Survey. A multitude of home search apps and websites signal improved user experiences and tech savvy clients. However, while emerging technologies are impacting how REALTORS® do business, they simply cannot substitute for the important role that REALTORS® play in the home-buying process.

The indication from consumers, according to research from both C.A.R. and the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS®, is that they will always need agent guidance and leadership. It will be REALTORS® who will yield expert analyses as we see an ever-growing maze of online options, information overload, and emerging technologies. While it's a good idea to keep your phones and tablets handy to help you keep on top of changing industry trends to grow your business, don't forget the basics.

For instance, a growing number of real estate agents are hiring coaches to help them to better utilize emerging technologies, manage large offices, and help to cultivate a client base–ultimately generating more sales. These coaches, many of them residents of California, have cultivated a considerable following from REALTORS® who have seen a significant return on investment. Wherever you are in your career, it's possible that you could benefit from talking to a professional real estate coach. Turn to page 18 to learn more about coaching in the 21st century.

We at C.A.R. are committed to helping members like you employ the latest technology tools to better assist your clients and advance your marketing, so turn to page 20 to learn more about new "smart" innovative trends that help you better promote yourself and your listings.

In addition to the feature articles on coaching and marketing this month, there's another piece I'd like to draw your attention to: August's legal column on page 10. The shift from the Good Faith Estimate and the HUD-1 forms to the new Loan Estimate and Closing Disclosure forms, which is effective Oct. 3 (tentatively), is an important change that REALTORS® should familiarize themselves with.

Ours is an industry of constant transition. While that comes with some challenges, it also comes with new opportunities to facilitate even smoother closings for your clients.

Sincerely,

Chris Kutzkey

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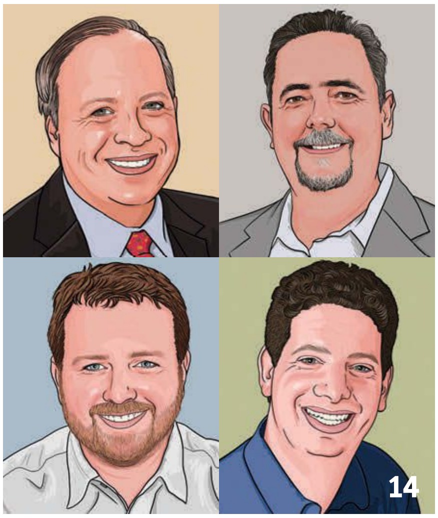
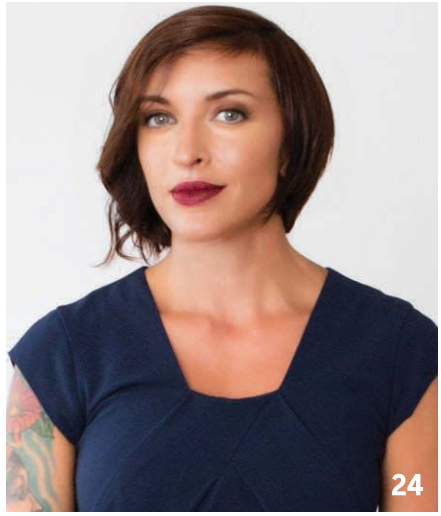
Contents

[AUGUST 2015 | VOLUME 96 | NUMBER 5]





Features

>>COMING NEXT ISSUE:

September's magazine will cover drought, drones, and demand for housing.
Also stay tuned for a profile featuring the prolific Dowell Myers.

Departments

COVER: Illustrated by Christian Northeast

View us online at www.car.org/newsstand/crem/current-issue

Correction: *The cover illustrator for the June/July issue was J.D. King, not Christian Northeast, as identified in the issue.*

BE HERE

IT'S YOUR TIME TO SHINE

2015 REALTORS® Conference & Expo

NOVEMBER 13-16 | SAN DIEGO

San Diego: The place to be this fall.

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November 13-16, 2015 • SAN DIEGO

[HELPING POTENTIAL OWNERS]

Turning Today's Renter Into Tomorrow's Buyer

Although 87 percent of homes qualify for down payment assistance, many potential homebuyers have no idea that they may be eligible for programs that could save them thousands of dollars.

Down Payment Resource (DPR) is looking to change that.

A new tool helps potential homebuyers find programs that could potentially save them thousands of dollars. Workforce Resource, a Web-based software company, connects people with hard-to-find financial resources and programs that they may not have known existed through their DPR.

DPR's website, downpaymentresource.com, allows prospective buyers to mine the company's national database of 2,300 different programs in their local areas and find out what resources–ranging from grants, federal housing agency programs, delayed repayment loans, interest-free loans and more–exist in their region.

Some of these programs can be layered with each other and can be used with most loan products, including federal housing agency loans. DPR is endorsed by the National Association of Local Housing Finance Agencies.

Most programs are geared toward first-time homebuyers, but some programs have a different definition for that category of homebuyers. For instance, the Federal Housing Administration (FHA), a division of the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), defines a first-time homebuyer (or a spouse) as "an individual who has had no ownership in a principal residence during the three-year period ending on the date of purchase of the property."

That means individuals who went through foreclosure and short sales during the height of the recession, and who have re-established themselves, may now qualify for these programs (some of which would need to be repaid).

Learn More >
Visit www.downpaymentresource.com for more information.

[110 YEARS]

Mark Your Calendar for EXPO

>> This year marks the 110th anniversary of the CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS®. That's 110 years of working diligently to preserve and promote a commitment to excellence, professionalism, and integrity within the real estate industry; and 110 years of working together to bring the dream of homeownership within reach of thousands of Californians.

Tech Tuesday is back by popular demand–for the first time in five years. C.A.R.'s full-day lineup of sessions will leave no question in your mind that the 2015 EXPO is being held in the tech capital of the world. Free sessions will be offered across all three days, including Tuesday.

And you won't want to miss this year's EXPO exhibit hall, featuring more than 200 booths showcasing businesses, products, and services designed to meet your everyday business needs.

Newscan

Business Briefs & Bottom-line Boosters

Double-digit Gains

>> With the California housing market continuing its upward trend, pending home sales registered their fifth straight annual gain, with the last three months being in the double-digits, according to the CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS® data released in April.

C.A.R.'s April Market Pulse Survey saw more floor calls and all cash purchases, compared to March. The Market Pulse Survey is a monthly online survey of more than 300 California REALTORS®, which measures data about their last closed transaction and sentiment about business activity in their market area for the previous month and the last year.

Mortgage Rates

>> The average 30-year fixed mortgage rate was 3.84 percent in May, according to the mortgage giant Freddie Mac. That average has dropped from 4.14 percent last year. Mortgage rates remain below historical averages, despite increases in recent weeks.

Supply and Demand

>> Only 5.3 months' supply of homes is on the market, versus an average of six months in a healthy market, according to the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS®. The number of national listings fell 0.9 percent in April compared to a year ago.

The median home sold in just 39 days in April, versus 52 days in March and 62 days in February. Sales levels dropped in the Northeast, South and West, but they edged up 1.7 percent in the Midwest.

Tight supplies have caused properties to fly off the market and prices to rocket upward–especially in California.

5 Reasons Why You Need ClientDIRECT®

How to Put C.A.R.'s Customizable Newsletter to Work for You

We all know there is nothing more important than staying current and relevant to your clients. But let's face it–sometimes it is easier said than done. C.A.R. wants to help you not only to stay connected with your clients, but also to keep you well-positioned as an invaluable resource for all their real estate needs. Here are five reasons ClientDIRECT® is the only e-newsletter you need.

>> Personalized to Meet Your Needs – ClientDIRECT® is a turnkey, agent-branded online newsletter that is automatically delivered to your clients every month. We provide everything you need, including the content! You can add your own custom header and image, personalize it with your photo and contact information, and even add your own listings.

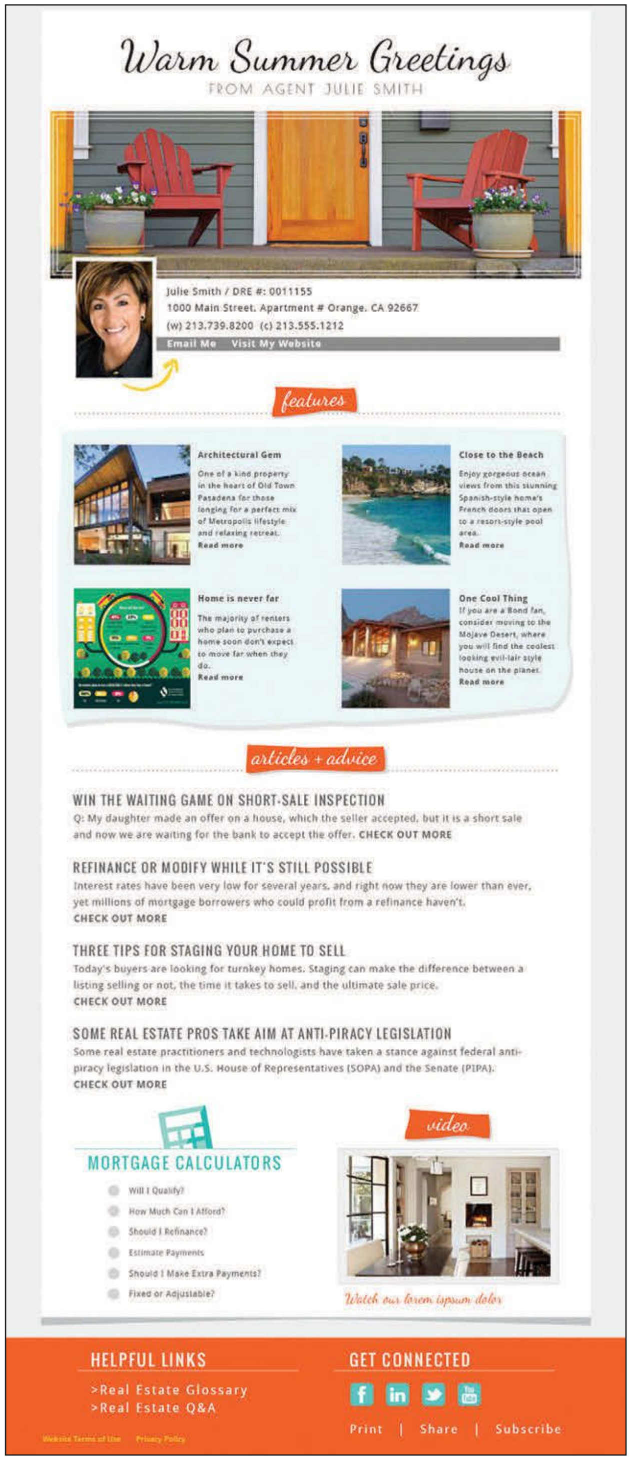
>> It's FREE for C.A.R. Members – There is no reason to pay $100 or more for another newsletter system when ClientDIRECT® is a free C.A.R. member benefit!

>> New Articles Available Each Month – You can select "consumer advice" from our growing library of real estate articles or write your own content. You can also share local information, as well as tips and tricks that will benefit your client, in order to remind them of the valuable services you provide as their REALTOR®.

>> Timely Infographics and Videos – Help your customers understand how to add value to their home or browse through useful tips for staging with our professional infographics and videos.

>> Set It and Forget It Feature Saves Time – Your time is your most valuable asset. That's why we've created a product that's simple to use and maintain. And once you've completed the initial setup process, your newsletter will be sent out to your list automatically every month!

Learn more at www.clientdirect.net. ◆



 | By Robert Bloom, Esq.

Say Goodbye to the Good Faith Estimate and the HUD-1

Q: On the first page of the new Loan Estimate form, I see the word "escrow." But it appears to be referring to costs the buyer will pay after close. Why is the buyer paying for the escrow after closing?

A: On the first page of the Loan Estimate, there are two references to escrow payments. However, the intended meaning of this is impound account. The use of the word escrow on the form is East Coast terminology. So the buyer is not paying for escrow costs after closing but may possibly be paying for property taxes, insurance and assessments through an impound account.

By now you may have heard about the change over from the Good Faith Estimate and the HUD-1 forms to the new "Loan Estimate" and "Closing Disclosure" forms. These changes are looming large for lenders, mortgage brokers, and title and escrow companies. But how will these new forms affect the practice of brokers and agents in the field? The answer is that they will have little impact on the duties and obligations of brokers and agents, and will not generally change the day–to-day handling of their transactions. There are a few things, however, that every broker and agent needs to know.

The Day of Reckoning

>> Oct 3. That's the tentatively scheduled day when lenders and mortgage brokers will have to begin issuing a new form called "The Loan Estimate" to borrowers. The Loan Estimate replaces both the Good Faith Estimate and the initial Truth in Lending Act (TILA) disclosures in most transactions. At closing, the lender will issue another new form called "The Closing Disclosure." The Closing Disclosure combines the HUD-1 and the final TILA disclosures.

Will the new forms cause delays in closing?

>> This is the $64,000 question. One of the big changes in the rules implementing the new forms is the "waiting period." The rules are complex, but the net effect is that the buyer must receive the Closing Disclosure and then wait–at a minimum–three days before signing loan docs. But given all the timing and delivery rules, it is more likely that the Closing Disclosure will have to be prepared and delivered between six and seven days before signing loan docs. Compare this to the current practice regarding the HUD-1 which is not typically delivered more than one day prior to settlement, and you can see what a big difference this is.

On top of that, the implementation rules are complex and the learning curve for lenders and title companies is steep. Will they be up to the challenge? No one can say for sure. So the cautionary advice at this point must be–expect delays in processing the loan.

What can brokers and agents do about the potential delays?

>> The honest answer is that brokers and agents do not really have a great deal of control over the loan process. (You probably already knew that.) But there are a number of common sense things that can be done:

One, it is more important than ever to stick scrupulously to the time frames in the purchase agreement and have all of your inspections, disclosures and negotiations concluded well in advance of close. Especially avoid any last minute changes to terms or costs in the purchase agreement, even small changes, since that may cause the lender to issue a revised Closing Disclosure.

Two, prepare to work around the lender delays. As a Hot Line attorney, I know that agents deal with lender delays day in and day out. This is a critical skill that all agents should have or develop. If necessary, you can consider negotiating for an extension.

Three, encourage your buyer to pick up the Closing Disclosure in person or, if the lender has established email as a means of delivery, the buyer should immediately acknowledge receipt of the email delivery of the Closing Disclosure. It is possible that by doing this one simple thing, the buyer could shave three or four days off any lender delay

Four, fill in the broker box on the last page of the purchase agreement completely. The new Closing Disclosure contains information on the last page concerning the brokers' names and license numbers, and the agents' names, license numbers, contact emails and telephone numbers. This information should be readily available for the lender so that they will not have to waste time gathering it. (The fax number is not necessary.)

Your buyer may receive several Closing Disclosures

>> The new rules require that the Closing Disclosure be delivered well in advance of closing. So any change in the terms or costs of the loan that renders the Closing Disclosure inaccurate will require the issuance of a new one. Additionally, even after close, any errors, even non-numerical ones, may require a revised Closing Disclosure. After the dust settles, your buyer may find him or herself in possession of several versions of the Closing Disclosure.

Where are the HUD-1 numbers?

>> The HUD-1 contains an elaborate numbering system. Every cost has to be placed and numbered in just the right way. But with the Closing Disclosure, that is all gone. Although the new Closing Disclosure has numbers next to the costs, they are there just to make it easier to read. The HUD-1 numbering system was viewed by the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau as superfluous and only adding to consumer confusion. So they got rid of it.

Confusion over title

>> There are two points to be aware of in regard to title. On the second page of the Loan Estimate, it shows the word "optional" next to the "Owner's Title Policy." You might get a question from your buyer asking why they need to buy an owner's title policy if it's *optional*. Well, it's only optional in the sense that the lender is not requiring it as a condition of obtaining the loan. But the C.A.R. residential purchase agreement actually requires the buyer to obtain or be provided with a title policy. In other words, it's not optional under the terms of our contract.

There is a second issue involving title insurance under the new forms, and that's how the price is represented. You might think that the actual price of the title insurance would be stated. But in fact the CFPB requires the non-discounted rate to appear on both the Loan Estimate and the Closing Disclosure as opposed to the discounted rate which is what most title insurers charge when both the owner's and lender's policy are purchased together. To make up the difference, the third page of the Closing Disclosure will likely show a title credit under "other credits" to get the numbers straight.

The seller's Closing Disclosure

>> Under the new rules, there is another

Continued on page 26

Steps to Stay Ahead of Hackers

Chantay Bridges is a Los Angeles-based REALTOR® who learned about the dangers of the digital world the hard way. Several years ago, Bridges was reeled in by a hacker after "clicking a link that I shouldn't have." The hacker gained access to her computer and wasted no time wreaking havoc in her digital sphere.

First and foremost, she lost control of one of her most important digital assets: her contacts. "They were able to send out spam emails to all of my contacts," she recalled. And that was just the beginning. She was also hounded by persistent security alerts advising her that a security certificate was no longer valid, encouraging her to install more malicious software. She even received phone calls from hackers masquerading as Microsoft, offering additional "help." As Bridges learned firsthand, once you let hackers in the front door, it can be very difficult to get rid of them.

That's why it's critical to be proactive about your digital security. At the top of any security checklist, you'll find the need to maintain good password hygiene.

Building Strong Passwords

» We won't use passwords forever– already, smartphones are tentatively exploring security alternatives like fingerprint readers and facial recognition. For now, almost any website or online account you need to secure will be locked down with a password. If you don't already use strong passwords, start at this very moment. You should use no fewer than eight characters, mixing upper and lowercase, numbers and symbols. If you can, make your passwords longer. Experts agree that longer passwords are always better than short ones, and a great recipe for strong but memorable passwords is to create passphrases that string together multiple words. According to howsecureismypassword.net, a well-crafted eight-character password can be cracked in less than a day while a 20-character password can take quintillions of years.

It's not enough to make one strong password and reuse it on multiple sites. That makes all of your accounts only as secure as the one with the weakest security. Every single site you access should have a different password. Of course, you don't need to memorize them all. Password managers like LastPass or Dashlane can securely store passwords for you and unlock sites as needed just by entering one master password (which you do need to remember).

Beware of Social Hacks

» Unfortunately, hackers know that passwords are generally hard to crack and they look for weaker links in your security profile instead. Often, the weak link is human, and hackers exploit people through social engineering. That means hackers talk directly to the customer support staff for your account. They'll impersonate you with a few pieces of personal information and try to manipulate support staff into giving them access to your account. When successful, they can circumvent the need for a password entirely and get control of your account as if they were you. Many financial institutions and online services are getting savvy about these kinds of social exploits, but such hacks can and do still happen.

You can minimize the possibility of getting compromised, but it takes discipline and pre-planning. For starters, minimize the personal information that you share online. This is good advice for avoiding any kind of identity theft; limit your Facebook profile to friends and family, for example, and don't accept LinkedIn invitations from individuals with whom you don't have any reasonable business need to associate. For public-facing websites, like your agency website, minimize personal details so you don't give ammunition to anyone looking to steal your identity or spoof a customer service rep.

> "You can minimize the possibility of getting compromised, but it takes discipline and pre-planning"

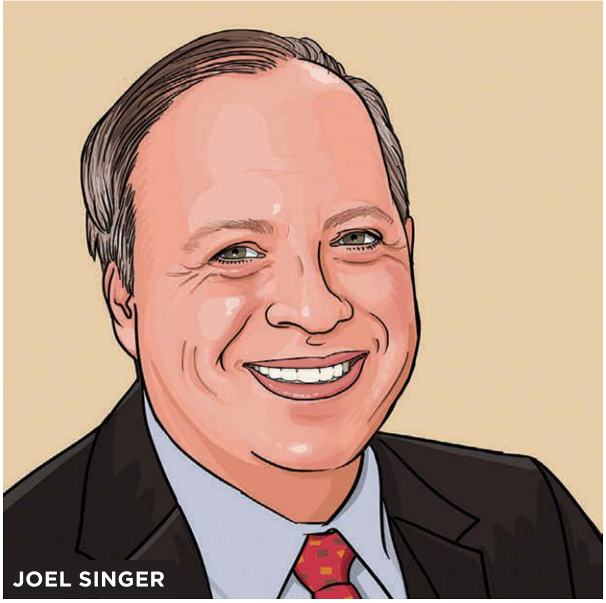
There's one other thing that you can do as well: Lie when you answer password recovery questions. Questions like "where did you grow up," and "what's the name of your first pet," are shockingly easy to research online, especially if you've experimented with different social networks or created online profiles at multiple sites. Instead, make up completely fictitious answers that no one could reasonably guess, and be sure you record your responses somewhere secure. Where did you go to school? You might answer "Sweden" or "purple" even if these answers couldn't be further from the truth. (If you use a password manager, you can store these answers in the notes section for each account, so you have the information if you really need it.)

Turn on Two-Factor Authentication

>> A new security precaution that wasn't an option just a few years ago is two-factor authentication (also known as two-step authentication, or just 2FA for short). Two-factor authentication requires you to input your password as usual, but if you're logging in on a computer or device that the site hasn't seen before, the site also asks you for a secondary code–one that's typically texted to your phone (or perhaps generated by an app). This is a highly secure solution, because the only way for a thief to get into a 2FA-enabled bank account is to have possession of both your password and your phone–and the passcode to unlock your phone as well.

Many sites and services support two-factor authentication these days, including a number of major banks, as well as Dropbox, OneDrive, Google, Facebook, Bank of America and Discover. Indeed, you can see what sites and services are currently 2FA-secure at twofactorauth.org. Two-factor authentication is a lot like strong passwords: Consider it table stakes in the game of digital security and use it whenever it's offered. 2FA won't make your digital data invulnerable to hackers, but when combined with other precautions, like strong passwords and minimizing your online social footprint, you can rest far easier, knowing you are not an easy target. ◆

Dave Johnson is the editorial director of eHow Tech and a contributor to CBS MoneyWatch.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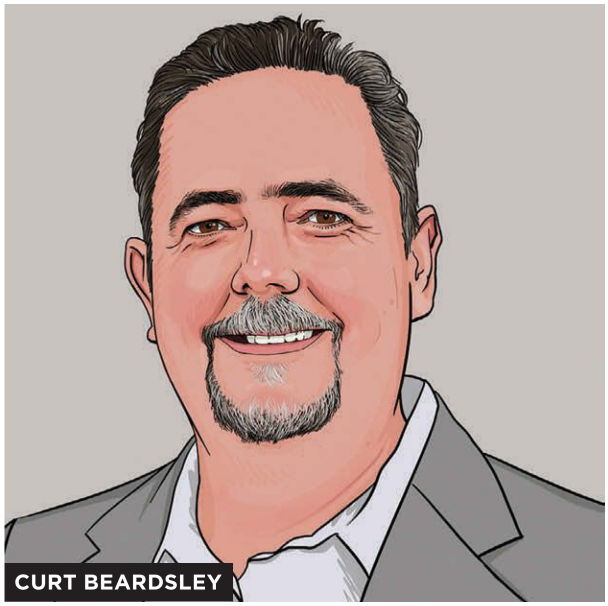

CURT BEARDSLEY

REINVENTING

Digital disruptions in real estate require strategizing, adaptability.

By Jeannette Brown

Technology coupled with consumers' growing reliance on a shifting landscape of online portals has compelled the CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS® to convene a special Thought Leadership roundtable on disruptions facing the industry. To offer perspective on this, C.A.R. CEO Joel Singer was joined recently by the following top executives: Zillow's Curt Beardsley, Vice President of Industry Development; Realtor.com's Luke Glass, Executive Vice President of Industry Platforms; and Trulia's Paul Levine, President (formerly Chief Operating Officer).

Importantly, the executives emphasized the profession's future prospects amidst the acceleration of audience demand for consumer-friendly real estate information on the Internet. It would seem the growth of Zillow, Trulia, and Realtor.com shows no signs of stopping, particularly in light of recent mergers. Addressing how the viability of REALTORS® will be challenged–remain intact–led the panel to proffer that the role of successful REALTORS® will probably change less as elements of the industry evolve. Furthermore, the panel suggested those REALTORS® who are already successful will continue to do well since they have the habits in place to adapt and maintain a strong level of productivity.

Singer emphasized this point by stating: "We have a strong belief that the individual REALTOR®, that REALTOR® who has local market knowledge combined with tech knowledge, and then has created their own brand with the individual consumer, is going to be a long-term survivor. But that doesn't mean the industry isn't going to look radically different in 10 years. But, of course, I've been saying this now for 35 years."

As for how the industry could look different and the various concerns stirring debate about shifts in economics and power, Singer prodded each executive to share his insights on the industry's fears of disruption and the value proposition of the portals.

Illustrated by Michele Melcher

LUKE GLASS

PAUL LEVINE

REAL ESTATE

The Fear of Disruption

While each portal's leader made reassuring statements that they have no interest in becoming brokers and disrupting the industry, Singer pointed out that their position with consumers is indeed another form of disruption. The Internet has created a new dynamic, as consumers go to the portals first rather than to a local REALTOR®.

Glass was quick to caution that disruption does not equal extinction, and that the major source of fear is not that brokers, agents, or MLSs will disappear, but that a shift in economics will create a level of uncertainty about who is perceived as creating the most value for the consumer. Any change in economics could affect the number of REALTORS® in the business. A lack of clarity about what the future holds has led many to feel threatened, according to Glass.

To explain the view of why many real estate professionals feel threatened by the big portals, Levine postulated that strong reactions evident throughout the industry are driven by the Internet's empowerment of consumers. This has forced many professionals to deliver the hard work of being true service providers, and Levine pointed to an example of disruption that he experienced first-hand in the financial services industry when he worked for E-Trade Financial Corporation. Just as old ways of relying on a financial advisor have significantly diminished, with these portals, listings are no longer a core part of the toolkit for a REALTOR®–something that foments resentment with respect to a changing value proposition.

Beardsley drew on a musical chairs analogy to describe fears of disruption that the portals have provoked across the industry, in which these sites have changed who has a seat at the table for transactions. Many professionals are struggling to see how they fit into this new world. In the past, he noted, if you knew your neighbor was a REALTOR®, then he or she would likely be the consumer's agent. However, with options online, the consumer can easily connect with someone who may have better credentials. "We're shifting the chairs of who gets at the table, and I think that

"We're shifting the chairs of who gets at the table, and I think that [real estate professionals] are afraid that when the whistle blows or the music stops, they're not going to have a chair."

> CURT BEARDSLEY

[real estate professionals] are afraid that when the whistle blows or the music stops, they're not going to have a chair," Beardsley stated.

Beardsley dismissed the notion that the portals are actually incentivized to disrupt the classic way that real estate works in North America. "We like what works. Our business models actually work quite well in the [current] environment," he said. Rather, he explained, there are other entities that are far more disruptive to the industry whereas the portals are "not really trying to undermine the fundamentals of the way that real estate gets transacted" because "we're just taking away the advertising dollars that are going into inefficient methods."

"In theory, technology should be making [REALTORS®] able to handle more simultaneous transactions."

> LUKE GLASS

Levine added that paying for the services of one of the portals should not disrupt the economics of a REALTOR®, and, when examining the average dollars spent per agent, the amount has not "changed meaningfully."

Adding further context to the economic realities of available real estate, Singer noted that there are real causes for concern. Specifically, despite all the technology, the number of sides per agent "is actually substantially less today than it was at the turn of the millennium." While the value of those sides has gone up, there are still fewer overall, on top of the fact that median incomes for REALTORS® are stagnant to down.

Zillow Group, Inc. Emerges After Zillow-Trulia Merger

In case you hadn't already heard, some of the biggest news in the real estate industry recently received an official stamp of approval from the Federal Trade Commission, thereby sealing the deal on Zillow's acquisition of its closest rival. As a result, Zillow and Trulia have officially merged into the new mega portal Zillow Group, Inc., leaving many in the industry to wonder what's next for its dominant online presence and how agents will be impacted. While Zillow and Trulia combined have millions in unique visitors, thereby representing a huge portion of the home buying audience, the new Zillow Group will likely have to focus on its rather small share of online advertising spending, as there is certainly room for growth. So as Zillow Group looks to grow its clout in the real estate lead generation, advertising and software business, real estate professionals can perhaps expect a robust presence from the portal's sales teams as well as various product packages.

There has been speculation as to how Zillow's plans to absorb Trulia will affect business for brokers and agents, such as advertising options. The advertising model on Trulia will dissolve and users will find that Zillow Group ads will be sold as they were previously on Zillow, i.e., on an impression-based model that spans both mobile and Web. As for other plans for Zillow Group, Zestimates, the much-maligned automated home valuations, will now be updated immediately when homeowners input edits. Zillow Group is in the process of unifying listing aggregation resources and creating one listing database that Zillow and Trulia will share for greater efficiency. By sharing resources and not competing for the same customers/consumers, Zillow is expected to save $100 million. However, it is questionable these savings will be fully realized.

That being said, the two portals also insist that in many ways they will still act as competitors against one another as a way to drive innovation and maintain their distinct brands. Another competitor for Zillow Group is News Corp. and its Move and realtor.com properties, and it remains to be seen how the two competitors will lure consumers with major marketing efforts in 2015.

These trends should be equally worrisome to the portals. It means less discretionary advertising spending. “In theory, technology should be making them more efficient, more effective, and able to handle more simultaneous transactions,” Glass responded. As a potential cause, Beardsley pointed to there being a greater number of agents. “If you’re spreading fewer transactions over a bigger base, or you’re spreading the transactions over a bigger base of people, that means they’re making less and less. It should indicate that you’re potentially going to get less and less professional service,” he asserted.

To address the aforementioned challenges, Singer also asked the panelists to review how their platforms can increase productivity and bring practical value to real estate practitioners.

The Value Proposition to REALTORS®

As the leading online marketplace for home buyers, sellers, renters, and real estate professionals, these portals have changed not only how REALTORS® strategize and conduct their business, but also how they redefine their value proposition. Conversely, Zillow, Trulia, and Realtor.com must also cultivate their value proposition to the REALTOR® community, and Singer acknowledged that he would be remiss not to force the panelists to consider not only how they view themselves but also how the industry views their business operations and value proposition.

Singer added that his question was driven by persistent concerns he has heard within the industry about the motivations of the online portals and how well REALTORS® are serviced by their presence. Singer directed the panelists to assess why many real estate professionals are skeptical of the return-on-investment (ROI) potential of the online portals, despite the fact that numbers indicate the Internet provides much more meaningful lead generation in comparison to antiquated and costly newspaper advertisements.

The panelists proceeded to address whether these views have merit or if they need to do a better job of showcasing the discrepancy between criticism of the portals and outcomes in which

“We feel proud of having brought efficiency, empowering consumers, and taking costs out of the system.”

> PAUL LEVINE

REALTORS® have greatly expanded their businesses. Glass noted that a significant challenge is getting brokers and agents in the industry to understand that Realtor.com is merely an advertising outlet. As such, he argued it provides an umbrella-level playing field for the entire industry in which it represents the brand. He posited that all three platforms are strongly focused on positive ROI for customers–REALTORS®–and that in particular, “[Realtor.com] tries to create the equation that data accuracy plus a good customer experience equals the highest quality leads.”

To encourage greater understanding of the por-

Continued on page 26

News Corp. Enters the Fray with Realtor.com Acquisition

News Corp., the new owner of realtor.com operator Move Inc., came out swinging in a new portal landscape shaped by acquisitions and consolidation. For instance, upon hearing of the official completion of the Zillow-Trulia merger, the newly acquired subsidiary of News Corp. published a press release stating, “Zillow’s year of the merge will be realtor.com®’s year of the surge.” News Corp. proceeded to remove the listing feed supplied by syndication platform ListHub (a subsidiary of realtor.com), which means Zillow Group is under more pressure to secure listings directly from multiple listing services and brokerages.

Speaking of those listings, realtor.com does have a structural advantage in that it receives MLS data directly for the highest level of accuracy.

Rupert Murdoch, the leader of News Corp., has touted realtor.com’s close relationships with the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS®, the REALTOR® community, and the accuracy of its listings as motivating factors for News Corp.’s purchase of the Move Inc. entity. The media mogul has made it clear that he plans to revamp realtor.com by enhancing its ease of use for agents, and pursuing major marketing efforts, which will involve promoting realtor.com across News Corp.’s sprawling network of media properties. The media platforms now available to realtor.com as a subsidiary of News Corp. may allow the portal to compete more strongly for web traffic. Move’s senior vice president of industry relations, Russ Cofano, has also hinted at changes coming to the way realtor.com displays listings.

Coaching in the 21st Century

REALTOR® tips for making plays that pay

BY CATHIE ERICSON

Picture yourself at a backyard barbeque. Someone asks you about the market. Most REALTORS® would likely respond with some variation of "Inventory is crazy low right now." They would perhaps ask if the guest is looking to buy or sell after a couple of minutes of conversation.

But can one tweak to that language expand your potential? Tony Giordano, an agent with kw Beverly Hills and a national speaker with a thriving coaching business, explained that using proactive techniques to pick up on verbal cues is extremely helpful. He explained that adopting certain methods of speaking and communicating helps agents make plays that pay.

"The second you start talking to a homeowner, you have to hook them," he explained. "Yes, inventory is crazy low. But I'd add, 'What's even crazier is that I can take my clients' properties and move them online and market them to any demographic anywhere in the world who has shown an interest in Malibu. It's shocking how fast we're able to move those homes online today.'"

Just like that, by changing your language, Giordano suggested, you have changed the conversation–and your status in the potential client's eyes. "It's what prompts the client to call you three years later and ask for more details on your marketing approach."

Illustrated by Joel Castillo

Welcome to Coaching 2.0, where our sources say that the innovation is coming from taking the basics—and sharpening them. Think of it more as an evolution than a revolution in freshening up successful techniques to really boost your business.

Read on for the six updated plays that California coaches shared with us:

Own a Super Niche

THEN: REALTORS® specialized by neighborhood.
NOW: REALTORS® specialize by type of house or demographic.

Specializing is critical. The days of generalist REALTORS® are over, explained Bryan Robertson, CEO and managing broker of Catarra Real Estate in San Francisco. When coaching agents at his practice, he advises each of them to pick a niche, and really drill down so they can focus on leads in a particular category.

Whether it's mid-century moderns or Victorians, that specialty will define the overall messaging, brand and marketing strategy that will resonate with the targeted home buyers.

Someone specializing in ultramodern lofts, for example, will adopt a look with simple, clean lines and choose advertising venues where those buyers congregate—think Instagram and downtown city events.

One of Robertson's newest mentees, Debra Shushan, became a REALTOR® in January. She has used this counsel to identify a market that is particularly relevant as she transitions from her current teaching career. "I am going to reach out to teachers, firefighters and police since that's a group I know well," she explained, adding that defining characteristics of this audience include steady incomes and a penchant for completing fix-up work themselves.

One Size Does Not Fit All

THEN: REALTORS® had a set formula for interacting with clients and marketing themselves.
NOW: REALTORS® who are aware of their personality profile can adapt as needed.

Anna Ward, vice president of Canter Brokerage in San Diego, conveys the importance of personality types with the agents she coaches to help them both assess the strengths of their own particular style and determine how they can adapt to better work with clients who differ.

"Anna helped me see how to mold my sales techniques depending on my client's personality; for example, allowing a Type A personality to take charge of certain aspects of the process," said REALTOR® Luke Middleton.

Another Canter REALTOR®, Matt Davies, realized that his extroverted style is more suited to holding open houses to generate leads than spinning his wheels on social media.

Bridge the Gap Between Old and New

THEN: REALTORS® either used traditional sales methods or relied on technology.
NOW: REALTORS® blend the best of both worlds for success.

Chris Rasmussen, who has worked with more than 200 Coldwell Banker agents on the art of becoming a "modern agent," said today's professional needs to marry technology with proven old-school techniques; in other words, be social at an open house *and* on social media.

Rasmussen, who at the age of 49 has been a REALTOR® for half his life, estimates that roughly half the agents in the business are like him—they started their careers before the advent of instant connectivity and social media. In fact, when he uses the term "older agent," he's not referring to their age, but rather their tenure in the industry. Likewise, a "younger agent" might be 50, but if they have only been in the business five years, they have always experienced real estate in the digital age. His goal is to help the two camps learn to blend the best of each approach.

Being too digitally focused can have its drawbacks, though, he cautions, offering the example of an agent who gets a lead and immediately puts that contact into their email drift campaign. When he asks agents what they would do if they didn't have email, inevitably they mention a meeting.

"I remind them that's still the first step they should take," Rasmussen said. "Too often REALTORS® are hiding behind technology, and the two sides need to merge. In today's environment you can't be 100 percent face-to-face or phone-to-phone, and you can't be 100 percent text and email."

Continued on page 27

IS YOUR MARKETING 'SMART'?

5 high-tech ideas to enhance how you promote yourself and your listings.

From 3D marketing tools to hyper-local neighborhood powered searches, real estate professionals are leveraging new technology into their marketing to hook prospects and better assist their current clients. Here are five ways brokerages are using technology in innovative ways to advance their marketing prowess in today's market.

By Melissa Dittmann Tracey

1. TAKE IT 3D

3D or three-dimensional printing has generated a lot of buzz among marketers, and it's expected to have a profound impact on real estate marketing. The marketing possibilities are abundant, from reimagining blueprints of new-home construction with small 3D replicas to the potential of interactive holograms that could revolutionize how buyers view properties. For example, the much-hyped Microsoft HoloLens, still under development, is a headset that superimposes high-definition holograms over physical places. One day, this could mean customizing an interior of a home with furniture, new wall colors, and new layouts based on your buyers' preferences by just having them slip on a headset as they tour a home.

While 3D technology is still in its infancy, 3D is already popping up in real estate marketing. For example, 3D scanning technology from Matterport is offering a way for real estate professionals to present high-resolution interactive views of every angle inside a home. From a computer or mobile device, potential buyers can click through properties as if they're walking through them like inside of a video game, looking up and down and all around as they discover the house virtually. The real estate brokerage Redfin has teamed with Matterport to offer 3D on a larger scale in its listings, rolling out its 3D Walkthrough online tours in 25 markets nationwide so far, including for listings in Southern California.

"Looking for a home today starts with an online experience that is visual in nature, and we wanted to bring that experience to a new level," says Karen Krupsaw, vice president of real estate operations at Redfin. "While professional listing photos are very effective tools for marketing a home, Redfin wanted to help people actually get a feel for what a home is really like. [Potential buyers] can move from room to room and carefully examine the layout and the flow of the home. This gives our listing clients an edge, and it gives home buyers an additional level of convenience and information."

> *"Looking for a home today starts with an online experience that is visual in nature, and we wanted to bring that experience to a new level."*

Photo: Courtesy Matterport

2. TELL A STORY

Storytelling can be powerful in marketing, and The Boutique Real Estate Group in Del Mar believes every home has a story to tell. Once the luxury brokerage gets a listing, its on-staff team–consisting of a graphic designer, stager, cinematographer, photographer, transaction coordinator, social media manager as well as the agents–meet to complete a creative brief for the listing. They hash out a marketing plan for the home, pulling from such details as the home's history, neighborhood appeal, and why the sellers purchased the home and what they loved about it.

One of the backbones to the branding is a professionally produced mini film. The brokerage's YouTube channel features numerous listing videos that weave in small storylines into its home tours, from a video showing flower petals on the floor leading to the courtyard with a man proposing to his girlfriend to a listing video shot from a bulldog's perspective. Another video features children playing a game of hide-and-seek through a $2.2 million luxury estate.

"We try to be creative and a little different," Raj Qasr, owner of The Boutique Real Estate Group, says. The film also serves as a great brokerage promoter tool. "When filming the movie, inevitably neighbors will come out and want to know what we're doing," Qsar says. "We tell them we're real estate brokers shooting a mini movie to portray the home and defend its value."

3. GENERATE HYPERLOCAL CONTENT

Instead of traditional self-promotional advertising methods, some real estate professionals want to come across as more neighborly. They're doing so by generating hyperlocal content about the lifestyle in their community's neighborhoods and promoting such content through social media, video channels, blogs, and powerful website searches that serve up information on a neighborhood-by-neighborhood level.

Red Oak Realty in Oakland has drilled down the East Bay area into subdivisions and neighborhoods through its award-winning Neighborhood Explorer website tool. Besides just viewing listings of homes for-sale, web visitors can peruse hundreds of photos and videos (which highlight the lifestyle) to even viewing business reviews as well as school information to get a better sense of the neighborhoods in a community. The brokerage seeks to connect at the community level through its social media efforts too, such as by sharing great restaurant finds around town or photos taken in the community.

"We don't really take the strategy of just promoting links on properties," says Arman Daro, director of marketing and business development at Red Oak Realty. "We believe that the consumer wants to see more entertainment than that. We take the approach of lifestyle marketing–content that feels like a real person and is not automated. That costs more money and it takes more time to do. But we believe it's worth it."

Brokerage Snapshot

7 Tech Tools for High-tech Marketing

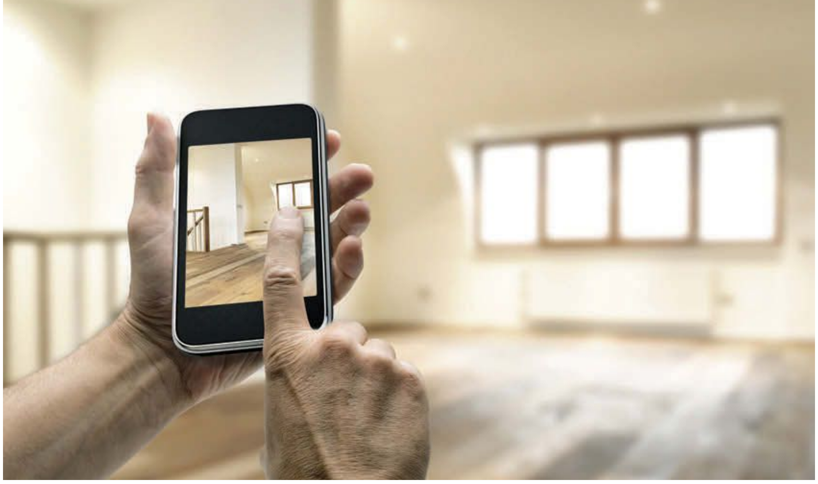
The goal remains the same: Make it face-to-face with prospects. But technology can certainly help foster those relationships, says Tristan Ahumada, broker associate with Keller Williams Realty in Westlake Village. His team—Tristan & Associates—has embraced a variety of tech applications and services to streamline its marketing efforts and improve its outreach. Here are a few his team is leveraging:

1. Interactive infographics: Create animated infographics for your social media channels to provide snapshots of a local market, such as by highlighting total active listings, short sales, new listings this week, pending sales, and more. https://infogr.am

2. Instant response to leads: FiveStreet.com sends instant notifications to you or your team whenever leads come in through your existing lead services—like realtor.com® or Zillow. Prospects also receive an automatic instant e-mail or text reply on your behalf. www.Fivestreet.com

3. Graphic design made easy: Canva is an image editing software to cre-

Photo: Boutique Real Estate Group



4. REAL-TIME VIRTUAL TOURS

In red-hot markets, home buyers need to act fast. But for out-of-towners that can be a challenge. Julie Ray, a sales associate with Coldwell Banker in Menlo Park, didn't want her clients in Switzerland to miss out on homes for-sale before they arrived in the U.S. for their house-hunting trip. She found FaceTime, Apple's video application on her iPhone, the perfect tool to walk her clients through properties, showing them a home's layout and zooming in on key features, from the kitchen sink fixtures to the plants growing in the garden outside.

Her buyers became so confident in their FaceTime tours they even were willing to pay $400,000 above the list price for a $1.7 million listed home–even though they had never stepped inside of it. When the buyers finally did see the home in-person prior to closing, they said it was exactly how they envisioned it, Ray says.

Touring homes virtually using video applications like FaceTime, Google Hangouts, Skype, or the new Facebook Messenger video feature can be a valuable tool when buyers can't be available in-person for a showing. "In a way, the buyers are in a much more relaxed state to view homes because they can just sit back in the comfort of their own living room and truly focus on the house," Ray says. "I don't think every client can take the leap of faith and do it this way. But maybe it's video conferencing in one party, like for a couple where the husband can make it to a showing but the wife can't. Sometimes, you just need to find any way you can to get the buyers in there."

5. FOLLOW YOUR LEAD

A prospect lands on your website, searches for homes for-sale, but then wanders away without ever leaving his contact information. Is that lead lost forever?

Some real estate professionals are investing in "remarketing" tools in the hopes of bringing them back.

The retail industry already has embraced remarketing–or retargeting–advertising. Let's say you are checking out a pair of shoes on a store's website. A few minutes later, you may see a Facebook ad highlighting those same shoes.

Likewise, in real estate, if prospects are checking out a listing on your site, they may later see an ad displaying that listing when they're elsewhere on the Internet. Retargeting uses "cookie" technology to track your visitors, anonymously, as they peruse the web. Several services are available for retargeting campaigns but one of the most popular is through Google's Adwords.

"It's a way of following people on the web," says Qasr, whose brokerages use remarketing with its listings and brokerage video ads. "As [prospects] go to other sites, they may see that listing pop up again in an ad. They then may believe it to be a sign–you're everywhere." ◆

Melissa Dittmann Tracey writes about real estate, business, and technology trends. She is a contributing editor to REALTOR® Magazine.

ate professional flyers, blog graphics, presentations, and more. It features an easy search and drag interface with pre-made templates and free images (or premium images available for $1). www.canva.com

4. Door knocking assistant: Spotio is an iOS and Android app for tracking sales activities of door-to-door prospecting. Add leads quickly to your database, and view your team's door knocking efforts on a map. www.spotio.com

5. Open house lead captures: Open Home Pro is an iOS and Android app that can be used to create an electronic buyer sign-in sheet to use at your open houses. Contact information can be uploaded to your CRM and the app also can send automatic follow-ups to your visitors after the open house. www.Openhomepro.com

6. Social media content generator: Keep your social media pages filled with localized real estate content. CityBlast will automatically post content such as real estate news, polls, quizzes, and inspirational quotes to your Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn feeds. www.cityblast.com

7. Saying thank-you: Instantly create and mail professional thank you cards from your iPhone or iPad. The Thank You Pro app features 20 designs to choose from. Input your message, add your handwritten signature, upload your contact information, and press send. Thank you cards are mailed within 24 hours. www.Thankyoupro.com

Photo: Shutterstock

Brokerage Charges High-end Sellers by the Hour

STATS

Courtney Poulos
Owner, ACME Real Estate

Age: 37

Strength: I think I have a sharp, clear vision and can convey it clearly. I think people like to hear my perspective because it's shaped around taking action opposed to paralysis. In our market, people are afraid of making mistakes; buyers never want to spend too much and always feel that they are, and sellers never want to sell for too little and think that they are. It's a recipe for paralysis.

Weakness: Time management. I don't have enough time to do all the things I'd like to.

Very first job: Bus girl at a pizza shop.

Can't live without: Fashionable high heels.

#1 on your "bucket list": Travel to Galapagos Islands.

Career choice #2: Advocate for natural births.

Best advice received: Life is about positioning and you position yourself with relationships. If you don't believe in yourself and if you don't only accept positions that increase your power, you'll never reach your goal.

It was an offer that defied the standard norms of the real estate industry and, initially, took REALTOR® Courtney Poulos aback. • Poulos' friend, Adam Levin, approached her with a business proposition that was a considerable departure from industry norms. About a year and a half prior, Levin's agent informed him that his property, which he was about to put on the market, was worth $2.5 million, based on comparisons she pulled on his Manhattan Beach neighborhood. • Levin, a labor attorney, was convinced the figure was closer to about $2.8 million, said Poulos. He told her, "I know what my house is worth and want to sell it for that." She told him it would never appraise for that price.

As a 10-year industry veteran, Poulos, owner of ACME Real Estate in Los Angeles, certainly understood the agent's position. "Real estate agents look at the big picture and try to persuade sellers to have realistic expectations. As a culture, we don't really let the sellers drive." In this case, though, Levin remained firmly behind the wheel.

He told his agent he was going to put his home on the market at his price and if she didn't want to list it, he'd find someone else. Poulos eventually agreed, and Levin, who has handled most aspects of the transactions of three houses he has owned, received an offer at the price he had been hoping for. The experience encouraged Levin to start his own agency, which came to be called Evolution Real Estate. It's a new concept in real estate, and not without concerns, as it allows sellers to remain in control of the sale of their home by offering them real estate agent services on a per-hour basis, explained Poulos, who went on to become his partner in the firm.

"Something is right with the model," she contended. "When we started to break it down, we realized if we had high-quality agents and volume, it's a savings for the seller. It made sense to investigate."

This method of selling, however, isn't for everyone.

"This is a savvy seller, who trusts his or her instincts and believes that in this market, the house sells itself," Poulos explained. Evolution provides consulting services and information that any agent would on a fair market value. Sellers not only control how much to offer their home for, but the selection of a photographer and whether to conduct an open house as well.

Poulos characterized herself as a very high-risk, high-reward personality. "I think this is a perfect time for the conventional model to be shaken up; for sellers to realize more savings through the sales process, and for high-quality agents to make a fair and honest earning for their knowledge and guidance and sales expertise," she contended.

The L.A.-based, top-rated agent has her hands full, as she's also ventured out into cable and satellite television in order to increase her profile.

Her television show, "My City's Just Not That Into Me," which recently debuted on

Continued on page 26

Photographed by Brian Davis

Profile: Courtney Poulos

Continued from page 24

the FYI Network, explores issues facing many home seekers today, namely loving their current city but being priced out and deciding where to move to improve their quality of life. "They were looking for a young Barbara Corcoran and wanted someone who knew what she was doing and still kind of hip. I have tattoos!" she laughed. "I think it was a perfect fit. I always address real estate with my clients as a relationship, and that's kind of the concept of the show. It's like breaking up with your city and you start flirting with other possibilities and decide whether to give your current one another go or venture out."

Poulos has a degree in public relations from the University of Maryland and a strong background in that industry. Not surprisingly, perhaps, her experience in public relations has been a boon to her in real estate. "I think I see the truth in things, like properties, and whether I believe they're a good fit for my customers." It's also helped immeasurably in terms of marketing, she continued.

In conventional real estate, a lot of agencies rely heavily on the marketing that the brokerages offer them, like templates for listing presentations, she suggested. When she created ACME, Poulos really wanted to place a premium on designing "super clean" websites and a blog, and firmly believes that the client comes before the brand. "That's why it's called ACME. It's a generic name because we put our clients' brand name ahead of our personal brand name."

She continued: "I think I'm one of the first ones here to put a client's name on listing signs because I want them to know it's about the product, not the brokerage." ◆

Chuck Green is a freelance columnist for several publications, including the Chicago Tribune, Los Angeles Times, Wall Street Journal, Bloomberg BusinessWeek Custom Publishing, and Crain's Detroit Business.

Reinventing Real Estate

Continued from page 17

tals' goals, the responsibility falls on the shoulders of the platforms, according to Levine, but he added that it is frustrating that misconceptions persist despite numbers that are highly favorable to the industry. For example, in 2006, Levine said $5 billion was spent just on newspaper classified advertising in the real estate category, and he compared that amount to the sum of the three companies' revenue, which is less than a billion dollars. Levine stated, "We feel proud of having brought efficiency, empowering consumers, and taking costs out of the system."

Beardsley acknowledged that Zillow is a bit of a lightning rod in the industry, yet more than 100,000 agents rely on it to successfully run their businesses. He suggested that some controversy likely stems from the fact that many of the industry's most successful agents are doing well because they have built their brand through traffic, leads, and exposure from Zillow, Trulia, or Realtor.com. This means the portals have made it possible to achieve success without being closely affiliated with a brand.

Singer stated that there is still a high level of dissatisfaction across the industry from those not getting a strong return on any money invested in the portals' services, and those brokerages and franchises continue to feel threatened, particularly after Zillow's acquisition of Trulia. While debate continues about which entities are facing the greatest threat of marginalization, the panel once again emphasized that consumers will still look to local experts with strong service when they buy and sell property. This led to the panel's final remarks on the longevity of the REALTOR® profession amid changes in technology.

Regarding such change, the recent acquisitions and mergers heighten the contrast (and competition) between new business forces and the more established history of organized real estate. Amid these transitions, REALTORS® will have to ensure the marketplace makes them indispensable to real estate transactions. The executives suggested they can do so by being consumer-centric service providers whose performance is enhanced by technology offerings available now and in the future.

The roundtable also revealed consensus among all panelists that public perception of who brings the most value to the consumer was a significant factor that couldn't be ignored in the years ahead. Perception's ability to shape the future dynamics of real estate–for better or worse–means the industry must proactively expect and address change. ◆

Jeannette Brown is a Communications Specialist for the CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS®. She can be reached at jeannetteb@car.org.

Legal

Continued from page 11

version of the Closing Disclosure that can be issued specifically to the seller. This seller's Closing Disclosure is only two pages in length, and has stripped out of it all of the information relating to the buyer's transaction and loan. Even though its use is optional, it's very likely that this form will become the norm simply because it is so easy for a settlement agent to prepare.

Where can I see these forms and get more information

>> You can see sample forms by going to C.A.R's legal page at www.car.org/legal. Once there, go to the subheading "Real Estate Resources/Law" and then sub-subheading "RE Regulatory Archives." You'll find the forms under Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. Also, C.A.R. has prepared a Q&A about the new forms called "Loan Estimate and Closing Disclosure Forms," which is available under the Q&A section of the C.A.R. legal page. Additionally, the CFPB site provides detailed information for everything related to implementation of the new rules. That information can be found at consumerfinance.gov, under "Law & Regulation." ◆

Robert Bloom, Esq., is Counsel with C.A.R.'s Member Legal Services.

Coaching in the 21st Century

Continued from page 19

Samuel Rad, a Beverly Hills-based real estate coach, also helps his clients overcome the great divide, suggesting that REALTORS® who are Internet-savvy but lack business skills take more formal occupational training, while established REALTORS® learn the latest in online marketing. He cites a client who had seen her business decline as technology use accelerated. Rather than leaving the industry as many of her veteran colleagues were doing, she took a course to up her social media moxie. "I always tell REALTORS® not to give up," Rad emphasized. "You can renovate yourself just like you can renovate a house."

Know Something Your Clients Don't

THEN: REALTORS® held all the cards.
NOW: REALTORS® have to add value beyond housing information.

In the pre-Internet world, REALTORS® were the experts—they knew what houses were available, their history and the comparisons for the neighborhood. But now, it's no secret that all the data anyone could want can be found with a swipe of the smartphone.

"Millennials want to be educated, not sold to," said Coach Rad, who counsels agents on how to work with this burgeoning audience. "And when you tell a Millennial something, be sure that you are correct because they are going to double check your facts online," he added.

Millennials are a key demographic as the dominant first-time homebuyers now and in the future—the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS® reports that in 2013 the median age of first-time homebuyers was 31.

As a Certified Financial Planner, Rad understands the value agents can bring is in educating buyers, especially Millennials, on how owning a home can help them economically. "Don't talk to them about curb appeal. Tell them about how much more money they will have in their pocket once they factor in their net after tax deduction interest rate." Rad coaches his clients that when REALTORS® position themselves as a resource and share concrete financial information that can help Millennials, they have created a point of differentiation.

If You Build it, They Won't Necessarily Come

THEN: REALTORS® would put up a website or Facebook page, and say they had mastered social marketing.
NOW: REALTORS® double down on what works best.

The majority of REALTORS® have embraced technology: The NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS®' tech survey found that 91 percent of all REALTORS® use social media in their business, and about half of those say they are either comfortable or extremely comfortable with it.

But being comfortable and being effective are two different things, and based on feedback from his classes and conferences, Giordano estimates about 80 percent of agents aren't using technology effectively. "There has been a seismic shift in the real estate field," explained Giordano. "For the first time in history, a rookie agent can take business from a veteran overnight if they know what to do."

The key is to use technology wisely. Robertson advocates consistency—choosing a platform and sticking with it. "Agents tend to dive in and use all the social media outlets at their disposal, which means their attention is scattered." Merely having social media accounts is not fruitful if they are not updated, and he finds that the vast majority of agents are allowing theirs to languish by posting infrequently.

He recommends REALTORS® conduct an audit to see which avenues are bringing in leads that convert to revenue. If a platform isn't doing its job, the next step is to figure out why—is it because the agent isn't using it properly or is it just not the right fit for them and their business? "If you're spending money on something and not getting any results, it's ok to stop doing it," he advised. "If you are working with Millennials, be on Instagram. If you're not, then don't."

From Rookie to Pro, Coaches for the Win

THEN: REALTORS® would use a coach to learn best practices, and then forge their own way.
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What do many successful REALTORS® have in common? They continue to use the services of a coach. Take Carlos Gutierrez, now with Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage's La Jolla office; he ranked in the top 1 percent of his former brokerage's national network of agents—and credits much of his success to being coached by the Mike Ferry Organization since 2009.

"If you got great results from your trainer, would you fire them?" he asked. "It's the same with a coach. Professional athletes all have their own coaches so why wouldn't you have one in business?"

Along with a robust marketing strategy, Gutierrez also supercharges his business the old-fashioned way by completing one very non-glam task each and every day: making calls from 7:30 to noon. The block is on his calendar, just like a listing appointment or client meeting would be, in large part because of the encouragement of his coach.

And that attitude gets to the crux of the issue that Robertson has seen: "What I've found with most training is that agents take it but don't act. My goal as a coach is to help my mentees move from a transactional mindset to be more effective business people." ◆

Cathie Ericson is a freelance writer who writes of family, business and real estate. Read more of her work at CathieEricson-Writer.com.

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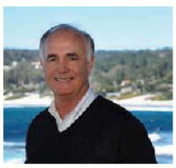

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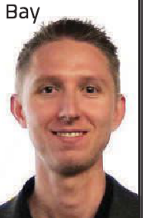
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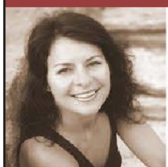
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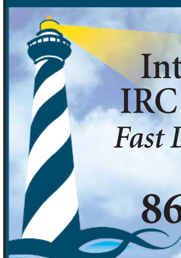
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'Distressed' Down

The top 10 spots for distressed housing when factoring in all U.S. cities are nowhere in California, according to Irvine-based data aggregator RealtyTrac. In fact, the share of distressed properties in California is down, C.A.R.'s latest survey numbers show.

RealtyTrac.com lists the top distressed locations as Allentown, Pittsburgh, Lancaster and Harrisburg-Carlisle in Pennsylvania, Cleveland, Dayton and Toledo in Ohio, Detroit, Mich., Memphis, Tenn., and Milwaukee, Wis.

Distressed single-family homes and condos that are in active foreclosure or are bank-owned can be purchased in those markets for 50 to 75 cents on the dollar—some at a rate less than a 20 percent downpayment on a Southern California home.

Just the Facts

» SALES ON THE RISE: California pending home sales were up 13.6 percent on an annual basis in April, marking the fifth straight month of year-to-year gains and the third straight month of double-digit advances, C.A.R.'s Market Pulse Survey showed.

Pending home sales in the San Francisco Bay Area, Southern California, and Central Valley regions posted back-to-back, double-digit, year-over-year gains.

The gains, however, may signal a tough summer ahead for REALTORS® and prospective buyers alike, who face a dwindling supply of homes in most areas.

» EQUITY AND DISTRESSED HOUSING MARKET DATA: The share of equity sales—or non-distressed property sales—edged up in April to make up 91.9 percent of all home sales, the highest level since 2007. Equity sales made up 91 percent of all home sales in March and 88.3 percent in April 2014. The share of equity sales has been at or near 90 percent since mid-2014.

Conversely, the combined share of all distressed property sales fell in April, down from 9 percent in March to 8.1 percent in April. Distressed sales made up 11.7 percent of total sales a year ago.

NUMBER CRUNCH

» The data below is updated each month and can be found at www.car.org/marketdata/marketglance/.

Market @ A Glance

California	Reporting Period	Current Period	Last Period	Year Ago	Change from Last Period	Change from Year Ago
Existing Home Sales (SAAR) *	April-15	427,620	391,440	391,330	9.2%	9.3%
Median Home Price *	April-15	$481,760	$468,550	$448,720	2.8%	7.4%
Unsold Inventory Index (months) *	April-15	3.5	3.8	3.6	-7.9%	-2.8%
Median Time on Market (days) *	April-15	34.2	39.0	33.9	-12.3%	0.9%
Traditional Housing Affordability Index (HAI) *	2015 Q1	34%	31%	33%	3.0%	1.0%
30-year fixed-rate mortgage (FRM) **	April-15	3.67%	3.77%	4.34%	-0.10%	-0.67%

Source: *CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS® and **Federal Home Loan Mortgage Corp.

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The Women's Choice Award is based on a 2013 nationwide survey of women. For information on the Women's Choice Award, visit womenschoiceaward.com/best-home/warranty-providers.