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ASIAN | REAL | ESTATE

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**INTERNATIONAL
BUYERS
SNAP UP
NORTH
AMERICAN
REAL ESTATE**

*WHILE THE
WINDOW OF
OPPORTUNITY IS
STILL OPEN*

A CLOSER LOOK AT **VANCOUVER**
CANADA'S GATEWAY CITY TO ASIA

EXPLORING the **UNIQUE FACETS**
of the **JAPANESE CULTURE**

THE RISE OF eSIGNATURES

WHAT USED TO BE A LUXURY IS NOW THE NORM, ESPECIALLY AMONG TOP AREAA PRODUCERS



REAL ESTATE AGENT AND AREAA MEMBER THAI HUNG NGUYEN HAD A PROBLEM. THERE WAS A GLITCH WITH THEIR LOCAL BUYER'S VA LOAN AND THEY NEEDED DOCUMENTS SIGNED RIGHT AWAY. BUT HIS SELLER WAS AT THE AIRPORT GETTING READY TO BOARD A PLANE TO VIETNAM.



Thai Hung Nguyen of Westgate Realty Group in Falls Church, VA sings the praises of eSignatures after saving a deal with a client signing at the airport just before takeoff.



North County San Diego transaction coordinators Michelle Liggett (L) and Ilima Martinez Kam (R) use eSignatures for 90% of their transactions.

Without the required signatures from both parties, they were staring into a delay of at least a week, not to mention a mountain of paperwork revisions and costly international shipping fees.

Fortunately, Mr. Nguyen was able to reach his client minutes before they shut the airplane door, and his seller was able to e-sign the required documents right from his Smartphone. Just a few years ago, that wouldn't have been possible.

Stories like this are popping up all over the real estate landscape. And it's not just the "save my deal" scenario. The convenience of eSignatures is making top producers even more efficient and effective.

Ilima Martinez Kam recently started her own business as an outsourced transaction coordinator in North San Diego County. She works for several high-producing agents and a real estate team and, along with her business partner, **Michelle Liggett**, handles about 300 transactions

a year. She estimates that eSignatures account for a full 90 percent of her transactions.

In the past, if you were using an eSignature solution, you were considered an early adopter. But as the real estate industry continues to evolve and uses more technology, if you're not using eSignatures, you may be missing out.

As the real estate market heats up in many U.S. markets, the use of eSignatures as a business tool is also coming into play.

Sean Aske works the rapidly changing Phoenix market, one of the hardest hit markets in the real estate bubble from a few years ago. "The abundance of foreclosures and distressed property sales have brought in pools of investors, especially in the lower-priced properties. Inventories are shrinking fast, and I've probably written a lot of offers in the past year. Multiple offers and counteroffers are the norm. Writing that many offers, often times in the field, without the

use of eSignatures would be nearly impossible. It's been a huge time saver," Mr. Aske explained. "The only downside to a market like this is it freezes out the first-time home buyer(s), who have almost no chance against 'all cash' deals or investment pools. We're seeing a big influx of Asian and Canadian buyers," Mr. Aske concluded.

The same goes for other hot markets, like Dallas and Seattle.

In Dallas, AREAA member **Trang Dang-Le** says it's turned into a seller's market. "We're seeing multiple offers and there's a ramped-up speed required to do business. You have to be fast and efficient, be able to sign counteroffers, and be on time," Ms. Dang-Le stated.

She recently had a client who lived in Dallas and moved back to Singapore. "We were able to do the entire transaction with ease and speed. We didn't incur international shipping fees or delay the process. It's just so convenient," Ms. Dang-Le concluded.

In Seattle, **Justin Kim** is experiencing a similar phenomenon. "It seems that every properly priced property is getting multiple offers. During the recession, builders stopped building, and as a result, there was a lot of pent-up demand. There's about 40 percent less inventory than a year or two ago," Mr. Kim suggested. He does almost all of his transactions with eSignatures.

SO, WHAT TOOK eSIGNATURES SO LONG TO CATCH ON, considering the U.S. federal ESIGN Act was enacted in 2000 by President Bill Clinton and gave the same legal validity to an eSignature as one done with a pen and ink?

For one, certain states were slower to adapt than others, especially in the area of real estate law. For example, the state of New York just began allowing electronic signatures in September 2012. Fannie Mae also approved eSignatures for their online forms in 2012. But some banks still want a pen and ink signature for documents, although that, too, is rapidly changing. The REO market is choppy for eSignatures as well, at least for the moment. But officially, real estate purchase and sale agreements can be executed electronically now in all 50 states, according to **Ken Moyle**, chief legal counsel at DocuSign.

The fact is eSignatures offer a convenience to real estate professionals and their clients, as well as an electronic trail of



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SEAN ASKE
THE ASKE GROUP
PHOENIX, AZ



"We're seeing multiple offers and there's a ramped-up speed required to do business. You have to be fast and efficient, be able to sign counteroffers, and be on time."

TRANG DANG-LE
DFW iREALTY
DALLAS, TX



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JUSTIN KIM
PREVIEW PROPERTIES
BOTHELL, WA



"It's just so easy to use. Just fill it out, tab to the next section, and you're done."

HELEN LIU-DESVEAUX
COLORADO R.E. COMPANY
CASTLE ROCK, CO

required online forms vendor, which makes e-signing especially easy and streamlined. If you use an iPad, tablet device, or smartphone in the field, make sure your eSignature solution works on that as well. Not all of them do.

Jenny Cui, founding (and current) president of the AREAA Austin Chapter, uses dotloop or DocuSign, depending on where the transaction originates. She recently worked with a family from Shenzhen,

China, who were buying a home for their children, one of whom was attending the University of Texas. In

Vietnamese, and Indian families.

AREAA member **Helen Liu-Desveaux** services the Castle Rock, CO area, just south of Denver. Her forms provider has integrated eSignatures into its product to make things easier. "It's just so easy to use," Ms. Liu-Desveaux explains. "Just fill it out, tab to the next section, and you're done." One area that could use some improvements is REO transactions where a "wet" signature is still required, and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development also requires originals (no copies or faxes). "So in those cases, it's a little less convenient," concluded Liu-Desveaux.

The use of technology in the real estate industry is key to staying ahead of the pack. Electronic transaction management, online forms, cloud storage, compliance checklists, digital showings, and eSignatures are necessary tools for the most productive and savvy real estate professionals.

Mr. Lee manages to hold it all together through his professional network and technology. He was about to embark on a travel schedule that would keep him out of the Bay Area for 60 percent of the next month. "I keep in touch with my clients and stay on top of things," says the 100-transaction pro. "Most of my clients don't even know I'm gone."

And that's one of the sweetest things about integrating technology into your practice. We all struggle with work-life balance, especially in the real estate business where weekends and long days seem to come standard. To be able to get away, travel, and be with your family can be the best reward of all, especially when it doesn't compromise your business goals. **are**

changes and updates. And for real estate agents who used to spend a lot of their time trying to coordinate signings and schedules, it's a huge time saver.

John Lee, a top real estate broker in San Francisco (and former treasurer of AREAA and president of the San Francisco Association of Realtors), spoke about the efficiencies. "I do about 100 transactions a year, and if I didn't use technology in my real estate practice, I couldn't do nearly that many. The use of eSignatures is critical because it's such an incredible time saver."

Mr. Lee was on the committee that selected the eSignature vendors for the San Francisco Association of Realtors, which includes DocuSign and Authentisign. "The only time I don't use eSignatures is when I'm dealing with clients that don't have email or are not very computer literate, which is a very small percentage," Mr. Lee continued. "It's also great for my international clients, who are more likely to be all-cash buyers." The very day we spoke with Mr. Lee, he was closing a purchase with a client from Malaysia.

So, what companies offer the best eSignature solutions for the real estate industry? That depends on whom you ask.

AREAA members can benefit

from the dotloop solution that includes free eSignatures as part of its dotloop-NOW offering. For \$20 more a month, you can upgrade to dotloop-PREMIUM, which includes unlimited cloud storage, phone support, templates and more.

DocuSign is used by many AREAA members, and is one of the most widely known eSignature solutions. Alternatively, Authentisign is offered as a member benefit by many MLSs, associations and brokerages in the U.S. and Canada.

Other solutions include Digital Ink (by zipLogix), Adobe EchoSign, CTMeContracts, and SIGNiX.

Often, real estate agents and brokers receive member-negotiated pricing on eSignatures as part of the member benefit program with their state or local association, MLS, or brokerage. Many of the eSignature solutions are integrated with their



JOHN LEE
PACIFIC UNION
SAN FRANCISCO, CA

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addition to her Caucasian clients, Ms. Cui works with a large Asian clientele composed of Chinese,



AREAA Austin founding president, Jenny Cui, of Keller Williams, serves Chinese, Vietnamese and Indian clientele using dotloop and DocuSign.

Sign up for free eSignature service from dotloop at: www.dotloop.com/areaa