



PROCESS IMPROVEMENT - BY TONY GARRITANO

Stretch Even Further

It's no longer enough to just do what you do, you have to do what you do even better to succeed today.

It's no longer a winning strategy to just continue doing what you're doing. You have to do more. You have to step out of your comfort zone to be even better. And let's face it, we can all be better. Those lenders and vendors that take this time to innovate and stretch out will be the ultimate survivors and winners.

For example, Blueberry Systems LLC developed a new, integrated point-of-sale (POS) solution, Embark, which enables lenders using Blueberry Systems' RELAY Loan Origination System to benefit from a more end-to-end system from loan application through post-closing, shipping and insuring. Blueberry Systems is creating Embark to meet the demand for a true, "one-stop shop" for mortgage lenders, providing a complete solution that eliminates the need for multiple decisions and selection of separate systems based on integration capabilities. The same data integrity and compliance tools that Blueberry Systems provides for processing, underwriting and closing are available at the point-of-sale. Blueberry Systems will continue to develop and maintain its Patent Pending integration technology, Conductor, for those lenders who prefer a best-of-breed approach to their mortgage production platform and may choose a seamlessly integrated third party POS to do so.

Those that select Embark will have their POS solution, imaging platform, data audit framework and universal data model working seamlessly in tandem through the entirety of the application process. "Blueberry Systems is dedicated to meeting the demands of mortgage lenders as they navigate a constantly evolving business environment," said Lloyd Booth, president and COO of Blueberry Systems.

"Our company's 'mortgage DNA' positions us to truly understand the complexities of lending today and Embark is a result of that understanding. With the addition of a fully integrated POS solution, mortgage executives are no longer required to make multiple technology related decisions in managing their loan production pipelines – this has direct positive impact

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on their operations."

And Blueberry is not alone in pushing the envelope to offer lenders more. Acris Technology, the software development company behind Mortgage VCO, a full suite of cloud-based software applications and business support resources for mortgage bankers and lenders, has launched a new consulting service designed to help lenders and other financial service companies build an entirely cloud-based virtual corporate office. Named VCO Airlift, the new consulting program will identify the specific steps a lender needs to undertake to run a compliant, scalable, paperless, virtualized mortgage office without the expense and complexity of on-site servers, software, maintenance and upgrades, while taking into account the company's existing software and business needs. Airlift will also pinpoint the savings in dollars that lenders will realize by freeing themselves from on-site servers and legacy systems and migrating to a virtual environment.

Airlift specifically leverages lessons gained since Acris Technology has been managing and hosting virtualized platforms since its inception in 2005. Earlier this year, Acris Technology launched VCO Desk, a virtual office platform tailored specifically for the mortgage industry. Through a secure

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Citrix environment, VCO Desk enables racks of servers to be replaced by an array of hosted, load balanced virtual servers, allowing desktop users remote access to all of a company's applications and data while providing greater IT power, scalability and security. Developed and refined over the course of years, VCO Desk had been in use privately for years by Laguna Hills, California-based Millennia Mortgage to process over \$10 billion in funded loans.

"Everyone is talking about cloud computing, yet it is not clearly understood by many small and mid-sized lenders in a way that makes it actionable," says Martin Williams, CEO of Acris Technology. "Because we have 'been there, done that' with our own virtual office platform, VCO Desk, it occurred to us that we can guide others who are weighing this transformation but aren't sure how to get there. We're calling it VCO Airlift because it is designed to 'lift' companies into a cloud-based environment, where so much more is possible."

"With mortgage rates at all-time lows, now is an opportune time for many lenders to be considering a cloud-based future," says Richard Johnston, president of Acris Technology. "Right away, they get greater data storage with automatic backups, better security and unlimited scalability to handle an increase in business – all with lower overhead. But they also get the ability to leverage mobile technology, add remote staff, and more easily manage today's tough compliance challenges through a single, common platform."

But it's not enough for vendors to do more and offer more, lenders have to do the same. They have to dare to be different. For lenders like Mortgage Network, Inc. that means doing more with paperless. "We have been paperless for 4+ years," said Brian Koss, EVP of National Production at Mortgage Network. "The advantage is flexibility and efficiency in the workplace. From point of origination to closing anyone in operations can see that file and work on it. It expedites the loan process and cuts down the days to close and days to purchase from our investors. It also allows us to find and leverage the best people in the industry operationally instead of just who is close to a major operations center. Empowering the best people is what

motivates them, while still protecting our risk with noninvasive and persistent quality controls."

Brian Koss joined Mortgage Network, Inc. of Danvers, MA as an Executive Vice President of National Production. Mortgage Network is a national lender with a \$2B annual retail business throughout the East Coast. Brian brings with him 24 years in the business and has personally lent as a Loan Officer over \$1Billion in home loans. From 2002 to 2006 Brian was the SVP of New England for Countrywide Home Loans.

He expanded on his paperless strategy when he noted, "GlobalDocs, our document imaging system started in 2004, was inspired by a Wells Fargo system used to exchange documents with correspondents. The Well's system made use of a single area where all documents uploaded by the correspondent would reside. The idea behind GlobalDocs was to use a similar concept indexing documents by loan and type. Sharing existing hardware and databases, it started as a very simple system – a couple of options built directly into our LOS. Due to its ease of use and accessibility, the system became very popular. As we realized the multiple benefits of using GlobalDocs, we quickly expanded the system. As our company's needs have changed, it has evolved to include the storage of several documents spanning multiple systems (credit, underwriting, trading, pricing, servicing, closing docs integrated with external doc prep provider). GlobalDocs now utilizes dedicated cutting edge EMC hardware with offsite redundancy along with a number of document manipulation features."

The paperless structure at Mortgage Network allows files to be transferred easily between offices ensuring efficient balancing of workload between offices. Files are delivered electronically to investors. Documents can be delivered outside the company via Secure E-mail, a feature of GlobalDocs. Going forward, the tool will soon have a feature which will allow borrowers to upload financial documents such as W-2, tax returns, pay stubs and similar documents into their file.

See what I mean? It pays to think outside of the box and improve what you do in order to do it even better. ❖

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