



NALTEA

The National Association of Land
Title Examiners and Abstractors

Message from the President

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Please visit our website at:

www.naltea.org

Pat Scott, President
Email: president@naltea.org

This being the NALTEA newsletter, we spend a lot of time touting the merits and accomplishments of NALTEA. This month, however, I'd like to bring another association to your attention.

The National Association of Independent Land Title Agents (NAILTA) was formed, in large part, for the same reason as was NALTEA. That is, to give voice to those whom, historically, have not been well represented within the existing industry associations. It's not that those associations are adverse to the interests of independent title agents, or to those of independent title abstractors. It's the reality that the interests of the bigger players and the smaller agents sometimes collide. And when they do, the bigger players often enjoy the backing of the organizations, to the detriment of the independents.

Doug Gallant and I recently had a phone conversation with Charles Proctor and Robert Holman, respectively the president and secretary of NAILTA, to explore where our associations' interests intersect. The conversation was enlightening, although I was not overly surprised to find that there is a lot of common ground between the two associations, and that we share many of the same concerns.

A major area of agreement lies in best practices for a stronger title

industry. Concerning title abstractors, both organizations favor a move toward state licensing of abstractors, with rigorous standards for entry and continuance in the field. We also found agreement, among other issues, on the benefits of developing uniform standards for the title searches.

The NAILTA representatives indicated agreement that a strong certification program is a good way to identify able abstractors, and to encourage continuing education, while licensing is pursued. With the consent of the NALTEA Board of Directors, I look forward to opening up our program for review by the experts at NAILTA. Feedback from other title industry organizations is valuable, whether in the form of constructive ideas or endorsement.

In order to make progress on these issues and others, I believe that the cooperative efforts of two organizations working together is far more feasible than the prospects of one or the other achieving these goals separately.

There will be further conversations between NALTEA and NAILTA in the near future. I am excited about the potential for realizing the shared goals of the two associations. The subject of these cooperative efforts will be one of several big items to be discussed at the NALTEA Board of Directors meeting on Monday, December 20th. I will be seeking the board members' ideas on where

Contact:

NALTEA
7490 Eagle Rd.
Waite Hill OH 44094
Fax: 216-771-7077
E-mail: info@naltea.org

our efforts will be most effective for the interests of independent abstractors. I would also like to hear your ideas as to which issues might be addressed to effect positive results for both independent title agents and independent abstractors.

Please contact me at president@naltea.org with your thoughts. To learn more about NAILTA, visit them at www.nailta.org. On behalf of the NALTEA officers and Board of Directors, I wish you a happy holiday season and a prosperous New Year.

Top 10 Year-End List of Abstractors to Prepare for 2011

Dave Pelligrinelli

Email: daveafx@gmail.com

During the last few weeks of the year, the business routine for many industries changes. For abstractors, the normal schedule is interrupted by several factors. Clients send batches of last minute orders to get done by year end, and there are some days when records offices are closed, or vendors are shut down for holiday parties. The last two weeks of December are an excellent time to regroup for the following year. Here are a few items to remember when it is busy, and to fill in during time when it is slow.

1. Check in with clients

You probably sent out dozens of Christmas cards to your client list, but cards are a one-way communication with no feedback. Picking some selected customers to call by phone offers an opportunity to reconnect with individuals. You can get some excellent insight into the outlook for a business with just a few minutes talking on the phone. There is a better chance of people having some time to spare this time of year. Giving your contacts the chance to tell you what is going on in their industry, and what their needs might be for 2011 gives you knowledge of what to expect, and puts you higher on their radar screen.

2. Records office contacts

When a day turns up with a slower volume, taking a few minutes to speak with records room staff might reveal current or future developments. We are finding that some records offices are making

big changes. Municipal budget pressures are cutting into staffing and payrolls for counties. At the same time, some counties are using government stimulus to make one-time investments in more electronic archiving, historical records scanning, and e-filing. It might be good to know about these to plan how you might adapt in the coming years.

3. Legal landscape

If there is downtime where you will be at home, it is an excellent time to catch up on legal developments which affect abstractors. Searching keywords and reading cases on Westlaw, Lexis/Nexis, and Leagle provides self-learned "CE". Seeing examples of lawsuits surrounding searches, proposed laws for the title industry, and court rulings on real estate issues might reveal ideas for better searching, or give you something to talk about with clients.

4. Networking with colleagues

There are thousands of abstractors across the country. You already know many of them. Get in touch with a few with whom you do not speak with very often, to get an idea of what is going on in their world, whether it is in an adjacent town or in another time zone. Fresh ideas and unique points of view will help both parties. You can even contact a random searcher you have never met before, and introduce yourself. NALTEA members are a good place to start.

5. Dreaded paperwork

As a business owner, you have administrative and bureaucratic obligations. Taxes, business licenses, association memberships, CE, payroll forms, renewals etc. Rather than scramble to pull together tax paperwork in April when you might be slammed with orders, take the free time you have in December to get most of it in one place. Fill out all the forms for your licenses and government reporting. Make sure your website address registration is renewed. Dealing with all of the admin issues at one time is more efficient, and keeps it from distracting you when you are trying to generate and build business during the year.

6. Buy stuff

If there is anything you think you might need in 2011, look into buying it now. The obvious advantage is that it creates a tax deduction for the current year. In addition, you might have

more time to research and compare products, and get a better deal when you have free time vs. rushing out to buy a new fax machine in March because yours broke and you don't have time to look into all the options. Price inflation is a real possibility, so stocking up on things you know you need can't hurt.

7. Schedule

Put all the big events on your calendar now. Deadlines, client meetings, industry conferences, etc. Seeing the plans for the year start to come together is a good motivator.

8. Throw away

If you are like me, there are files, wires, books, notebooks, and other junk all over your office. I want to be able to walk in the door on Monday January 3rd to an office clear and ready to launch into 2011. I personally use a 60 day rule; if I haven't used it, touched it, or needed it in 60 days it gets tossed, or at least stowed somewhere.

9. Help us at NALTEA be an excellent industry association.

Think of 3 things NALTEA can accomplish in 2011 which would help you the most personally. Go to <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/KKYR9PB> and let us know what your suggestions are. The NALTEA board works hard for the benefit of the members, and we would like to work on things which are your priorities. It takes 2 minutes.

10. Relax and do nothing

Be sure to make significant time to spend with yourself and family, with no concern for work stuff. It is good for your family and it is even a good business strategy to recharge and take a break from even thinking about one more document.

I hope you have a very enjoyable holiday season, a rewarding year-end, and wishes for continued success in 2011.

The organization welcomes input from the membership. You can contact the board members or the various committee chairpersons at the e-mail addresses found on the NALTEA website at www.naltea.org.

Planning and Events Update

Ed Gunther

Email: egunther@infotrackinc.com

It's time to announce our first event for 2011. On Monday, January 17th NALTEA will present the first of what we hope will be several regional Meet & Greet events. This one will be held in Rockford, IL at the Clock Tower Resort. The Clock Tower Resort is a very popular resort and meeting center. It is located just off Interstate 94 at US 20 in Rockford, IL.

The event is free of charge to those interested in learning more about NALTEA and meeting members of NALTEA along with members of the NALTEA Board of Directors.

The event will run from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm. The NALTEA Certification class will be presented for a \$50.00 fee per attendee not including the NALTEA Certification text book. The class will start at 10:00 am and run till 4:00 pm.

Information will be available on the web site soon. The class size will be limited and early registration is advised.

Information about the Clock Tower Resort is available on their web site: <http://www.cloctowerresort.com/>

The resort will be offering discounted room rates for the weekend prior to our meeting. With Monday the 17th being Martin Luther King Day, this could be a great getaway weekend. The resort also features the CoCo Key indoor water park. Check it out and come to the NALTEA Meet & Greet!

Find us online at Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn!! Just search NALTEA and join the conversation!



Board of Directors Update

Jill Kissell

Email: jillkissell@a1abstracting.com

Since this is the last Board update you will see this year, I want to open this article with a huge thanks to everyone who helped make 2010 a productive, successful year for NALTEA. It took the involvement of numerous individuals and companies to carry out NALTEA's business this year. Not only does this thank you extend to the faces and names that we all know - your Board of Directors, officers, conference speakers, and members, to name a few - but also to all those who contributed behind the scenes - the people whose efforts and contributions got us from point A to point B without their names ever showing up anywhere. I can't name all of those people individually, - there were so many involved that I don't even know who they all were. But you know who you are. You are the person who monitored the NALTEA website and answered 10,000 questions from the Board through the year; or the person that boxed up the conference hand-outs and shipped them off to Dallas; or the person who set up the NALTEA social media pages; or the person who helped move tables from one conference room to another at the annual meeting; or the person who contributed articles to the Newsletter during the year. The list is endless. And we are grateful to each and every one of you for your contribution this year.

Normally at this point I would give you a general recap of what happened at our last meeting - but actually I find the recitation of meeting minutes to be extremely boring - so, again, this being the last update you will see this year, I think I will stray from the beaten path in favor of a broader view of what your Board does for NALTEA.

All of the Board members either chair a committee or act as liaison between the committee chair and the board. On the Planning and Events Committee, we have Ed Gunther, who is already busy planning next year's annual conference. We have been discussing locations and Ed has already begun obtaining quotes. We are also having discussions with the National Public Records Research Association (NPRRA) on the possibility of holding a joint conference this year or at some other point in the future. Conference planning is a never ending project for the Planning

and Events Committee.

On the Ethics Committee we have Tamikio Veaseley who is also NALTEA's secretary. It is Tamikio's job to monitor and review all ethics complaints that come to NALTEA and make a recommendation for resolution to the Board. In a perfect world Tamikio would never have anything to do on this committee. But its not a perfect world, and when an ethics complaint is filed, Tamikio dedicates hours of research and review to NALTEA.

For the Education Committee we have Debi Merrill. The Education Committee is responsible for maintaining the integrity of our testing and certification system, administering the test, issuing certificates, monitoring compliance with CE requirements, and providing other educational tools to the membership as the need arises. The Education Committee, in conjunction with the Public Relations Committee, will be working this year to gain further recognition and acceptance of NALTEA's certification process. The education committee will also be reviewing the testing methods (test administered by NALTEA member vs. taking test online) and making recommendations to the board concerning both methods.

On Membership we have Pat Scott who is also the Association President. Pat tirelessly recruits new members - and I mean tirelessly. Thanks to Pat's efforts we have maintained a fairly consistent membership throughout an economic crisis that has caused professional memberships (and especially those in the financial and real estate sectors) to suffer. This committee is also responsible for recruiting sponsors, following up on membership renewals and implementing incentive plans to gain new members (such as the "Bring in 3 get yours free" campaign). The Membership Committee's stated goals for 2011 are:

- 1. Redesign membership recruiting material.**
- 2. Redesign tri-fold brochure**
- 3. Bring in a minimum of three new sponsors**
- 4. Bring in 10 new members per month**
- 5. Update committee web page**

The Public Relations Committee is chaired by Dave Pelligrinelli, who seems to have endless energy for marketing NALTEA. Over the course of 2010 Dave's projects included organizing, printing and distributing NALTEA's first printed membership directory; authoring drafts of white papers; and speaking at the annual conference; to name just a few. The Public Relations Committees' projects and goals for 2011 are:

- 1. Coordinate with Education committee to complete Certification Program co-op with the Virginia Land Title Association.**
- 2. Engage with at least two additional local title associations. Possible areas of engagement are combined member benefits, joint policy statements, coordinated events, training, cross-promoted membership.**
- 3. Ninety-day advance media promotion of 2011 NALTEA Conference and other spring event.**
- 4. Minimum of 6 significant published NALTEA works; press releases, policy statements, position papers, trade publication articles**
- 5. Conference videos onto NALTEA website.**
- 6. Establish communication with at least two industries outside of core real estate.**
- 7. Repeat projects, i.e., Printed directory (advertiser supported); webcasts; and continued visibility.**

Joel Kissell is the new chair person for the Benefits and Publications Committee. He has assumed responsibility for editing/publishing the newsletter and has set a goal is to have it distributed each month by the week the 15th. Other newsletter goals are to publish a technology "tip of the month" article; and to gently persuade the membership (THAT WOULD BE ALL OF YOU!) to contribute articles. Joel is also working on logos for NALTEA and will be trying to spend some establishing a presence for NALTEA on social media websites such as FaceBook, LinkedIn and Twitter

On the benefits side of this committee, our Vice-President, Doug Gallant, will again be exploring important benefits, such as malpractice insurance. This is an extremely important issue to all of us, especially when revenues are down and premiums are at an all time high. Some conversations have

been started with providers, and we will certainly keep you advised of the progress in this regard.

So, here's good-bye to 2010 and hello to 2011. We hope you all have a happy and safe holiday season and we look forward to sharing a healthy and prosperous new year with all of you.

Analysis of Land Title Records

Dave Pelligrinelli

Email: daveafx@gmail.com

Title abstractors have a unique and valuable expertise in records research in that in addition to just searching and retrieving documents, professional title abstractors read and analyze records. Even for basic searches, some understanding of how documents relate to each other is needed. Experienced abstractors who perform complex searches have advanced analysis skills which are a valuable asset.

Research services in general are transitioning more towards providing intelligence, and full service solutions rather than just "fetching" documents. Providing one segment of service may not be the best pursuit for individual abstractors.

Easier access to land records through electronic and online portals levels the playing field for searchers. The most competitive abstractors will not be those who compete on lowest price, but those who add the most value to the client. Competitive advantage comes from providing the client with valuable intelligence and answers from a compilation of data lookup, observation, and most importantly anticipation of what would help the client achieve their goals.

In a typical real estate industry order, a title report is used as a basis for underwriting a title insurance policy. The impact of this seemingly simple report is often overlooked. For a very low price, a piece of paper is provided by a Professional abstractor which guarantees an asset worth hundreds of thousands of dollars. The value of rock-solid accuracy should be worth something to the client by itself. Clients create a perception of your accuracy compared with other searchers through your interactions with them, and analysis is a big part of that.

Nowhere does this factor come into play more-so

than in the investigative industry. For public sector investigations in agencies such as the FBI, CIA and Department of Defense, analysts are the most crucial part of the investigative process, it is not just about looking up data. Cultivating excellent analysts is the highest priority for high level managers. In the private sector, investigative agencies who rely on surveillance and simple background checks are running into the same sort of pricing problems as the abstractor industry. Those are low-level services which many competitors can offer, so pricing is cutthroat. Investigators who are thriving are those who offer deeper and more insightful analysis of the gathered intelligence.

Technology provides private investigators more raw data coming from electronic databases, video surveillance, and subject interviews. Converting that to the crucial facts for client is where the value comes from. Sorting through the data more important now. Does this sound familiar? One of the biggest problems for the professional abstracting industry is the perception that title records are "data", that just needs to be looked up.

Depending upon the client type for the abstractor, deeper analysis of land records can also reveal valuable information. An abstractor might notice that a notary stamp was expired when signed, or that signatures don't match between documents. Abstractors always verify legal descriptions on documents, but what about typos an names and dates within the document?

The issue of title document integrity has become a mainstream news subject in light of the mortgage assignment crisis, robo-signing, and nominee trustee controversy. Highlighting specific instances of inconsistencies on documents for clients will show them that you are paying attention to every last detail when searching. Even if the client does not need that particular detail for their needs on the search, they will certainly remember you as the abstractor that does not miss anything. That identity will make you make you memorable to them, provide confidence that they can rely on the accuracy of your searches, and justify the pricing of your searches when a newcomer offers a possibly inferior search for \$5 less.

Editors Notes, Tidbits, & Tips

Joel Kissell

Email: joelkissell@a1abstracting.com

As the holidays approach, rapidly, it is time to make sure your wish lists for the season are finely tuned and full of the things that will make your work and personal lives easier. Regardless of whether you are naughty or nice, make sure that you stuff your stockings with these gadgets and gizmos.

2.0 USB Flash Drive

Pictures, PDF's, Software Downloads, Documents...whatever you need, wherever you go. This model is an HP® brand, but any brand will suffice. The important information is the storage size and the fact that it is USB 2.0 compatible. Store all your most frequently used documents on one of these and take them with you. For those road warriors out there, the ability to pull up to any computer and printer and access necessary order forms or invoice information is invaluable.



Blackberry Playbook

<http://us.blackberry.com/playbook-tablet/>

As we further utilize Blackberry's in our office, I was excited about the upcoming technologies that are being developed. Granted, this gizmo hasn't hit the streets yet, but come March of 2011, it will be the companion to your Blackberry phone, that Silver was to the Lone Ranger.

- Full computing power in a tablet format
- Email, calendar, BBM™, tasks, documents and more
- WiFi capable
- Full access to Blackberry applications

