



TOP
25
TECH-SAVVY
LENDERS

Presenting this year's list of lenders at the forefront in using technology.

Last year *Mortgage Technology* magazine included a lot of top 25 lenders in this list. This year, however, that has changed. Mid-tier lenders make up most of the list of lenders using technology to remain ahead of the mortgage market.

Why? There has been a lot of consolidation at the top of the market that has forced small and mid-tier lenders to try new avenues to compete and remain relevant. In addition, new regulation is making it almost impossible for lenders to avoid automating. And with future RESPA changes expected, lenders will have to adapt.

Nonetheless, there remains a steady crop of lenders that realize the significance of technology. As evidence, the MERS eRegistry now has over 100,000 electronic notes on its system and that number is growing every day. So, in alphabetical order, here are this publication's picks for the 2009 Tech-Savvy Lenders.

By
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AmTrust Bank

www.amtrust.com

A former *Mortgage Technology* award winner as Ohio Savings, AmTrust leverages technology today to offer hybrid e-closings that can be done in 15 minutes. AmTrust has a national presence in retail banking, mortgage and construction lending, investment and insurance services.

AmTrust Bank registered the ten thousandth e-note on the MERS eRegistry on April 4, 2008. A member since June 2002, AmTrust Bank has been a leading proponent of electronic mortgages and began registering e-notes on MERS in July 2005.

Chicago Bancorp

www.chicagobancorp.com

Chicago Bancorp, a Chicago-based independent mortgage banker with additional branch offices in Arizona, California, Florida, Texas and Wisconsin, has reduced loan turnaround times by more than 40% using technology. This was accomplished by consolidating several different systems and unifying its operation on one database of record.

Prior, the lender used to e-mail files to transfer between branches, and there was no fast and easy way to ensure consistency, accuracy or data integrity. Now Chicago Bancorp uses its LOS to create custom forms and disclosures, as well as to automate its existing lending process.

The company emphasizes its technology focus on its homepage when it touts that, "Chicago Bancorp combines the optimum mix of online convenience, technology and mortgage-banking expertise to guide you through. We will pre-approve your loan within 24 hours of receiving your information online. Through our streamlined process we are able to of-

fer you discount loans and lower closing costs than traditional lenders."

Direct Mortgage Wholesale

www.directmortgagewholesale.com

Castro Valley, Calif.-headquartered Direct Mortgage Wholesale is using its technology to go green. The company has rolled out electronic signature technology to enable borrowers to electronically sign initial disclosures. Further, Direct Mortgage's new e-sign process allows for automation of many back-end verification processes as well as indexed shipping of loan files to end investors.

The firm also uses an automated locking engine that provides instant electronic confirmation of loan locks to its users. Users are also able to re-lock for same-day pricing, extending loans, and floating all without any manual intervention.

Envoy Mortgage

www.envoymortgage.com

Envoy Mortgage, formerly First Houston Mortgage, is a Houston-based national mortgage banking firm currently licensed to do business in 31 states offering retail residential lending services, from the initial application to closing and shipping. Envoy has programmed embedded warehouse tracking mechanisms and management formulas that increase warehouse line utilization.

In addition, the company has programmed automation of initial quality control processes where the paperless system performs checks on loan packages. These checks assure the presence of document images in the electronic file prior to underwriting submission. Lastly, Envoy has smart work queues that automatically keep work loads balanced.

Envoy notes on its website that technology helps the organization better control the process and offer a streamlined process. The company says, "We are able to ensure an accurate and faster closing process because each step occurs in-house – processing, underwriting, closing, funding, shipping and secondary marketing. Because we control the entire process, there are limited surprises for our loan officers, borrowers and banking partners."

Fairway Independent Mortgage Corp.

www.FairwayIndependentMC.com

Fairway Independent Mortgage Corp.'s newest initiative is an imaging system that further ensures file integrity and security, while facilitating faster, more efficient delivery of information. Throughout the past year, Fairway, headquartered in Sun Prairie, Wis., was able to easily adapt to the market's volume spikes by leveraging technologies that enable off-site connectivity, secure access to information and file transfer.

All in all, these technologies enabled Fairway to hire a number of experienced underwriters to manage an influx of new loan applications and quickly incorporate the new staff into work processes, while maintaining security and compliance, which is why they earned a place on this list this year.

Florida Capital Bank Mortgage

www.floridacapitalbank.com

Florida Capital Bank Mortgage, a Jacksonville-based wholesale lender operating nationally, used technology to fill the void as many opted to exit wholesale. Florida Capital was looking for a Web-based system to enable clients to conduct business effectively online, when the firm chose Avista Solutions.

The lender originates loans with mortgage brokers online and delivers them to investors electronically. Florida Capital Bank Mortgage originates conventional and FHA loans exclusively through its broker network, and has been adding account executives across the country as part of its strategy to fill the void left by departing lenders.

Fifth Third Bank www.53.com

For over 150 years, Fifth Third has been providing financial products and services to its customers. At present, Fifth Third continues to further complete its e-mortgage adoption. The company uses Fiserv's eLending platform and is in the process of getting certified on MERS. Fifth Third hopes to close its first electronic mortgage this year. Fifth Third traces its origins to the Bank of the Ohio Valley, which opened its doors in Cincinnati in 1858. In 1871, that bank was purchased by the Third National Bank.

With the turn of the century came the union of the Third National Bank and the Fifth National Bank, and eventually the organization became known as "Fifth Third Bank."

1st Mariner Bank www.1stmarinerbank.com

1st Mariner Bank, a Baltimore-based retail mortgage banker with 17 branch offices throughout Maryland, Massachusetts, North Carolina and Virginia, has achieved higher data quality while also safeguarding against potentially costly errors, as the result of deploying a new loan origination system, Ellie Mae's Encompass.

1st Mariner is tech savvy because the company is using its existing technology to the fullest to stay ahead of a very challenging market. For example, the company has built custom

business rules into its LOS to ensure data integrity. The rules will also stop the loan at any point if crucial data is missing or if any other red flag pops up that violates the company's risk threshold.

Flagstar Bank www.flagstar.com

Troy, Mich.-based Flagstar Bank is famed in the mortgage industry as a pioneer in creating a paperless back office. A wholly owned subsidiary of Flagstar Bancorp Inc., Flagstar Bank was the first lender to sell electronic mortgages to both government-sponsored enterprises, Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac.

Flagstar made headlines this year by working with MERS to enable warehouse lenders to operate in a fully electronic world in an effort to solve the problem of disappearing warehouse lines. The lender is also in talks with FHA to pilot e-mortgages with them this year, as well.

GenEquity Mortgage Inc. www.genequity.com

GenEquity Mortgage Inc., a division of Paragon Global Resources, has an incredibly unique niche in the relocation mortgage market. Most customers are high-level executives from Fortune 500 companies with average FICO scores in the 740 range.

The company purchased a loan origination system that included a pricing engine, but found it needed a more comprehensive system that could manage high volumes while providing updated, accurate data. GenEquity selected Optimal Blue, based on the system's fourth generation technology, real-time content, as well as its 99.9% accuracy rate.

The company's ability to isolate the weakness in its existing technology

and quickly integrate a best-in-class provider makes them tech-savvy.

GMAC Bank www.gmacbank.com

GMAC Bank has taken a huge step in furthering e-mortgage adoption. The bank is now accepting e-mortgages and has adopted e-vault technology to electronically audit and store e-mortgages that aren't sold to Fannie Mae or Freddie Mac. The GMAC Bank, trust operations, document custody division provides its clients with ease of access to their files while safeguarding the collateral. Services include initial and final pool certification in accordance with agency guidelines, accurate collateral tracking of the pool, file and document level, and audit and safeguarding of a portfolio or individual loans pending sale.

Guild Mortgage Co. www.guildmortgage.com

Headquartered in San Diego, Guild Mortgage has proven to be tech-savvy because it has opted to introduce the use of electronic signatures into its process. Specifically, Guild uses Xerox Mortgage Service's e-signature solution as a secure way to sign, store, access and manage the lifecycle of legally binding electronic documents. Guild is using Xerox's e-signature technology to comply with the Real Estate Settlement Procedures Act that mandates the tracking and management of disclosure documents within 72 hours. The solution has also helped Guild decrease costs, increase the pull-through rate and go paperless.

Lend America www.lendamerica.com

Lend America, Melville, N.Y., launched its automated paperless platform in Feb-

bruary 2009, and today all of the company's loan originations from entry into the organization to closing are conducted as a paperless transaction.

Utilizing key technologies, this fully integrated collaborative solution allows borrowers to e-sign disclosure documents via a secure portal and/or submits the documents required for their loan. In addition, the platform allows borrowers to communicate real time with Lend America's mortgage specialists and is combined with an automated fulfillment process tracked at every step for those without online access. Using a multi-layered SSL encryption technology, consumer data is always secure and monitored 24/7.

Lenders One Mortgage Cooperative

www.lendersone.com

St. Louis-based Lenders One Mortgage Cooperative offers access to the latest technology to its members. From loan origination systems to fraud prevention, to training, the company has developed relationships with the industry's leading providers in order to offer members the most up-to-date service available.

While Lenders One is not a direct lender, the company represents more than 125 mortgage lenders. In addition to innovative technology use and business model, Lenders One has developed several programs that put members in a position to outpace their competition.

MetLife Bank

www.metlifebank.com

MetLife Bank uses virtualization to allow its staff to work from any location and still access systems and data from any Web-enabled device. In 2008, MetLife reduced its number of servers from 105 to 12, with no decrease in ca-

capacity, saving 18% on energy bills in the data centers.

As a result of virtualization, MetLife is on track for a projected cost avoidance of more than \$1.5 million in 2009 alone. Also, in concert with technology partner Fidelity National, MetLife Bank has been gradually migrating its applications to Unix platforms, increasingly leveraging server virtualization as part of that project. LaPenta says virtualization can reduce server counts by about a 1,000-to-80 margin.

NetMore America Inc.

www.netmoreamerica.com

NetMore America Inc. was launched in October 2007 by Mark Freedle, CEO. The company's vision is to be the next generation mortgage banking leader through a sustainable mortgage production platform incorporating responsible lending practices. NetMore is on its way to achieving this goal by using technology to create what it calls a friction-free process, which is why the company is on the list of tech-savvy lenders this year. The company has brought on industry veteran Lisa Schreiber as chief strategy officer to direct its technology strategy as it implements Web-based solutions to eliminate paper from the process.

Pentagon Federal Credit Union

www.penfed.org

Pentagon Federal Credit Union's philosophy is to be the low-cost provider through use of automation and self-service opportunities. Over the past 12 months the company's lending business has grown by leaps and bounds, but they were entrenched in paper-based processes. PenFed also found itself struggling with workload balancing and compliance and reporting needs across its three centers. By

enabling employees to gain easier and timelier access to loan documents and related information, the decision to implement a paperless lending solution across the board by leaning on their vendor, Fiserv, the company is now 100% paperless.

SunTrust Mortgage Inc.

www.suntrustmortgage.com

SunTrust Mortgage Inc., Richmond, Va., has successfully combined several different technologies by Metavante Corp. to create an end-to-end automated process. SunTrust utilizes online point-of-sale technology in its retail and third-party mortgage operations.

Metavante's origination technology contains pricing functionality that allows SunTrust Mortgage to provide customized, risk-adjusted pricing in an increasingly complex mortgage environment. Additionally, SunTrust Mortgage uses Metavante's fee module as part of its retail fee management system, enabling the lender to generate specific fee disclosures. Metavante also provides Federal Housing Administration/Veterans Affairs lending capabilities for SunTrust Mortgage, to support their goal of growing their government lending infrastructure.

Supreme Lending

www.supremelending.com

Supreme Lending was founded in 1999 with a formal commitment to leveraging the most powerful proprietary and third-party technology solutions to better serve its customers and its staff.

At Supreme, technology is a fundamental component in attracting and retaining top talent, generating more and better loans, providing the highest level of customer service, and closing loans in the fastest, most compliant

and most efficient way possible. A full-service mortgage banker with multi-state licenses and over 100 branches throughout the U.S., Supreme's operations are based on a customer-for-life philosophy.

Supreme Lending is headquartered in Dallas.

The Provident Bank www.the Provident Bank.com

The Provident Bank made the strategic decision to begin engaging in e-lending initiatives. The Provident Bank continues to seek new ways to provide its business and personal banking customers with the products and services they need to manage their financial resources in an increasingly complex environment.

In addition, the company employs a comprehensive Web portal suite that provides multiple lending options such as consumer loans, personal lines of credit, second mortgages, auto loans, mortgages and small business loans. The Provident Bank is able to deliver a streamlined application methodology that automatically processes an application fee, pulls credit, LP and populates everything directly into its LOS to provide the borrower with an instant decision.

Trident Mortgage Co. www.tridentmortgage.com

Trident Mortgage Co. has used technology to transform its office environment, as employees who previously spent 30 minutes looking for a file now have immediate access to them. In addition, Trident leverages BlitzDocs for seamless integration with its Harland E3 LOS, which reduced keystrokes and streamlined data validation between data in the LOS and on the documents. The company has also saved nearly 60% on paper and toner usage. Trident

is a full-service mortgage banker, offering a full spectrum of programs, and a streamlined application process with the ability to talk to a person in a streamlined fashion.

United Fidelity Funding Corp. www.uffmortgage.com

United Fidelity Funding Corp., a national wholesale and retail mortgage banker headquartered in Kansas City, has implemented a decisioning suite for its business channels. The Loan-Score Decisioning solution integrates seamlessly with United Fidelity's back-office loan processing and fulfillment platform for ease of communication, data population, lock request submittal, real-time loan status and conditions management between sales staff, underwriters and processors. United Fidelity plans to grow without adding more staff by moving the bulk of the underwriting process to the POS. As a result, underwriters can focus on conditions management and loan reviews to process more loans while ensuring quality control.

Universal American Mortgage Corp. www.uamc.com

Clearwater, Fla.-based Universal American Mortgage Corp. makes it on the list because it uses BlitzDocs to organize documents electronically – making them available online through a single Web-based shared folder. BlitzDocs permission controls allow UAMC users to access only the documents they need to review, allowing them to get their jobs done faster. Users can also electronically track where loans are throughout the approval process, eliminating the paper-based copies. Web services integration with their loan origination

system provides seamless loan processing and allows UAMC to electronically deliver to multiple investors on the secondary market.

Wells Fargo www.wellsfargo.com

Wells Fargo continues to broaden its e-mortgage strategy. Most recently, the top originator aligned with approved vendors that currently include eLynx, DocuSign, Encomia, Fiserv, SigniaDocs, Wolters Kluwer Financial Services and Wave eSignSystems.

Now correspondents can deliver Wells e-docs at the point-of-origination using these approved providers. The strategy is to extend this to include complete e-closings as well. And this technology focus has paid off as Wells became the No. 1 originator in the first quarter, with volume increasing by 50% as compared to one year prior.

Wintrust Mortgage www.wintrustmortgage.com

Wintrust Mortgage, a Chicago-based national lender with over 30 branches, has gone live with a Web-based loan origination platform after a remarkably brief 60-day implementation period. Major software implementations often take two to three times that amount of time, or even longer in some cases.

Wintrust Mortgage recently merged one of the Chicago area's largest mortgage originators into its existing mortgage company, an affiliate subsidiary of a well-capitalized national bank. Bringing together these two companies, Professional Mortgage Partners and WestAmerica Mortgage Co., has allowed Wintrust to use technology to create a multichannel mortgage bank, originating loans with retail, wholesale and correspondent capabilities. **MT**