

Case Study – Real Estate

Realty World John Horton & Associates

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JoAnne McKinney
Realty World, John Horton & Associates

Real estate sales is a fast-paced and extremely mobile business. Time-sensitive offers and counter-offers, data sheets, and other information are constantly flying back and forth, primarily via fax. Yet with brokers spending the majority of their time out of the office previewing properties and meeting with clients, receiving and responding to those faxes in a timely manner is often challenging.

One firm that has solved the time and distance conundrum is Realty World, John Horton & Associates. Rather than bringing their agents to the fax machine, they’ve chosen a solution that allows the faxes to go directly to their agents – anywhere they can get an Internet connection.

The Customer

As the 6th largest company in Austin Texas, Realty World, John Horton & Associates does a huge volume of business – much of it via fax. The company has 185 agents spread across eight offices. Their goal is to be the most respected real estate company in Central Texas. To do this, they feel their agents must have the most up-to-date knowledge and practices in the business.

Real estate broker JoAnne McKinney has been working with the company for five years and is part of the five-person Stratus Team. JoAnne works 100% by referral and is a ClubNet member with Buffini & Company, the largest business coaching network in the country. She is a four time Peak Performer, a Buffini Certified Mentor, and the coordinator for the Central Texas Regional gatherings.

The Challenge

Ever since they gained popularity in the 1980s, faxes have been a fast, simple way for real estate brokers to communicate information between themselves, to banks, to lawyers, and to other interested parties. Even with the explosive growth of e-mail in the mid-1990s faxes have continued to be a major component of the day-to-day business of real estate. There are two reasons for this: 1) faxes can carry a signature to verify the legality of a document and 2) they allow forms to be filled out manually and then transmitted instantaneously.

Faxes are normally sent and received via a machine – either a single-purpose fax machine for heavy volume use, or one of the “all-in-one” units that have become popular in recent years – connected to a dedicated phone line within the office. For real estate brokers, this stationary location presents an obstacle, as agents who spend a lot of time in the office usually don’t last long in the business. Important fax documents come in and go out through Point A, while the agents are usually at Point B, C, D, E, etc.

When Internet faxing was first introduced, JoAnne McKinney saw the value immediately. She saw that it was a means of cutting the cord from the office because it allowed faxes to be transmitted directly to her e-mail account, which she could access anywhere she could get an Internet connection. The concept would also allow her to carry faxes with her on her laptop rather than in paper form, making them instantly accessible anytime she needed them, day or night, from anywhere she happened to be. This benefit became more important as her business grew and she found herself traveling for business or pleasure 2-1/2 to 3 months out of the year. Internet faxing allowed her to travel more while keeping her business going. Going direct to her e-mail account also assured greater privacy than using a public fax machine – something very important to any agent. All in all, Internet faxing presented a competitive edge that she was quick to adopt.

As she got into the service she was using, however, the flaws of that provider began to show. What started as a “free” service turned out to have hidden fees. The service itself was unreliable, often creating delays in sending or receiving or being unavailable entirely. If she needed help with a problem she found that customer service was generally non-existent. In the end, she determined that she still liked the concept but needed to see if there was a better provider – a company whose goal, like her own for her customers, was to exceed expectations.

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The Solution

After doing some research, JoAnne discovered MyFax™. Rather than jumping right in, especially given her first experience, she decided to do a side-by-side comparison of the two services. It didn't take long for her to drop her original service in favor of MyFax.

“Every single thing about MyFax proved to be better,” says McKinney. “That's not an exaggeration. MyFax was more reliable, and the cost was less than what I was expecting. I also liked the fact that I received a preview of the faxes in the e-mail rather than having to open up each one. It let me prioritize what needed an answer right away, what needed to be forwarded for someone else to work on, and what could be saved until later. That was a huge time savings for me.”

Forwarding in particular was a big issue. A typical real estate transaction might involve 27 people by the time it's completed. Standing at a fax machine sending a fax multiple times is a major time-consumer, no matter how fast the machine is supposed to be. If the document is faxed more than once, it begins to lose readability and integrity as well. With MyFax, JoAnne is able to forward multiple copies at once, and all have the same readability as the original she received.

MyFax's ability to deliver the same fax to multiple e-mail addresses also helps in this regard, she says. All incoming faxes are automatically delivered to JoAnne, her assistant, and her partner. Clients are assured that important, time-sensitive documents aren't falling through the cracks due to a fax sitting in the tray of a machine in a dark office.

Another feature JoAnne liked was being able to receive faxes in a choice of formats, including as a PDF. In addition to making the faxes easier to read and store, the PDF format created another benefit.

“My team started faxing forms we received to ourselves to make them easier to forward to clients who have e-mail but no faxing capabilities,” she says. “MyFax converts the form to a PDF which can then be e-mailed to the client for their review. We can make the conversion without losing the formatting, and without having to purchase an expensive program to create a PDF through Acrobat.”

While she found many of the individual features valuable, the overall reliability of MyFax was the most important benefit, according to JoAnne. Much of this is due to her approach to the business.

"I work 100% on referrals," she says. "I feel if I take care of my existing clients, they will do more for me than any form of advertising. To make good on that I need to be able to work quickly and efficiently. I can't be waiting for a fax to go through, or waiting for someone at the office to read a fax to me because I'm not there. MyFax helps me deliver the kind of service that leads to referrals, and helps keep me on top of my game."

The Result

JoAnne says that she's been far more efficient since switching to MyFax – even when she is out of town.

"Last year I was out of the office traveling for 25% of the year," she says. "Yet I was able to double my business. If it weren't for MyFax I wouldn't be able to run my business and take those kinds of business trips or vacations. For example, I went to Ireland with a big transaction pending. One night around 3:00 AM local time I took my laptop to an Internet café, checked my faxes, and was able to secure the transaction. Either the deal or the trip wouldn't have happened if it wasn't for MyFax. I'm definitely sold."

In fact, JoAnne is such a fan that she has recommended the service to most of the other 184 agents at Realty World, John Horton & Associates. Many of them have followed her lead and are generating similar results. Not only is it better for the individuals, but it's also better for the company overall as they have greatly reduced their expenses for paper and toner each month.

"The most important things I receive are faxes," JoAnne adds. "It's obvious that the people at MyFax understand that. I really believe it's the one business tool no agent should be without."

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About MyFax

MyFax is the fastest growing Internet fax service used by individuals, small, medium and large businesses to send and receive faxes using existing email accounts or the web. MyFax offers services in North America, Europe and the UK to industries recognized among the fastest growing adopters of internet fax including finance, insurance, real estate, healthcare, transportation and government. More than 10,000 new customers subscribe to MyFax each month. Additional information is available at www.myfax.com.

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