George Mason Mortgage Reduces Turn Times by Three Days, Improves Borrower Experience with Encompass Consumer Connect

The challenge
George Mason Mortgage, LLC (GMM) was founded in 1980 as an independent lender offering white glove service to customers in the Washington D.C. metro area. Now, a wholly owned subsidiary of United Bank, GMM is a top lender in the mid-Atlantic region—building its reputation by combining high touch and high tech to create a unique market niche.

Although the company gave its borrowers an excellent, efficient in-person or phone-based experience, until recently, it didn’t have a 24/7, online option.

“We realized, although we’re purchase driven, we weren’t giving our borrowers a ‘choose your own adventure’-type experience, or what we have now branded as Intuitive Lending™ at George Mason Mortgage,” explained Andria Lightfoot, senior vice president of information systems for George Mason Mortgage, LLC. “We didn’t want to make the experience entirely self-serve, but, offer a hybrid model that simplified the homebuying experience for our customers.”

Company leaders piloted what they thought was a best-in-class digital solution, with disappointing results.

“It didn’t take long for us to see that the system was designed to in vast opposition to the way we do business,” said Shannon Johnson, director of technology solutions for George Mason Mortgage, LLC. “Our loan officers and operations team were frustrated, and the numbers proved that we weren’t doing anything faster.”

The solution
That’s when an Ellie Mae VP told Lightfoot and Johnson about Encompass Consumer Connect™. After seeing the product in action, they decided to make the switch, starting with a six-week, four-branch pilot, followed by a full, 15-branch rollout.

“With Encompass Consumer Connect, Ellie Mae has created a transparent, efficient workflow, where minimal change to our operations staff gives us a huge lift in our customer experience,” Lightfoot said. “Our loan officers aren’t changing their level of service to customers, but now they have a better tool in their toolbox to help make it easier for everyone.”

Now their customers don’t have to wait until they get home to upload documents or sign disclosures. They just log into the secure borrower portal from their mobile device or web browser and get outstanding tasks done.

“The same place borrowers go to engage with the loan officer is where they upload documents and sign disclosures,” Lightfoot said. “Many systems do an excellent job with online applications, but don’t continually engage that customer to reinforce the borrower-lender relationship. Ellie Mae knocked it out of the park on that point.”

Loan officers also have the capability to help borrowers with things like password resets and account verification—both of which used to be managed through a Help Desk.

“Our loan officers can also see partially submitted applications, so if Joe Smith started an application three days ago and didn’t finish...”
“We’ve seen a three-day pickup in our turn times from application to underwritten loan.”

Andria Lightfoot
Senior Vice President, Information Systems
George Mason Mortgage, LLC

it, the LO can reach out to him to prompt him along,” Johnson said. “That transparency puts loan officers in control of their books of business so they can build relationships.”

Because the solution is part of Encompass, the integration is seamless. If documents are exchanged, it’s a secure pass to and from the disclosure engine. And nearly every aspect of Encompass Consumer Connect™ is customizable.

“We can uniquely design the experience for our customers, from the look of the landing page to how the questions we ask are worded,” Lightfoot said.

Although Encompass Consumer Connect offers a variety of self-service options, like letting borrowers order credit reports or verify assets, George Mason Mortgage has the freedom to add these at its own pace.

“We love that there are configuration points in the services, so we can choose to roll out what we want, when we want, and sequence those in the way that makes the most sense for us,” Lightfoot said.

The results

Although at the time of this writing, George Mason Mortgage was just one month shy of its 15-branch Encompass Consumer Connect rollout, the company has already realized some impressive results.

Reduces Loan Turn Times

“We’ve seen a three-day pickup in our turn times from application to underwritten loan,” Lightfoot said. “And we’re just out of the pilot stage.”

George Mason Mortgage also had a loan close in 12 business days within the first week of implementing Encompass Consumer Connect—a huge win, by any standards.

Improves Security

Any time companies go digital, security becomes an issue. With Encompass Consumer Connect, Lightfoot can rest assured that borrower data is protected.

“When a borrower comes into the secure portal, everything the borrower shares is already integrated with Encompass, so there’s no way for those documents to get misplaced or stolen or hacked,” she said. “The security is baked in.”

Improves the Borrower Experience

For George Mason Mortgage, it comes down to letting borrowers combine channels to create the path that makes securing a mortgage easiest for them.

“For us, Intuitive Lending™ at George Mason Mortgage is about giving our customers choices,” Lightfoot said. “With Encompass Consumer Connect, we’ve created a hybrid approach to meet every customer’s need.”

According to Lightfoot, branch managers are already commenting on how quickly they can engage borrowers, and get the documentation they need to get the file into processing more quickly.

“If I had 30 days to close the loans, but could get everything done in the first 15 days, that would be the gold standard,” Lightfoot said. “With Encompass Consumer Connect, I think it’s possible.”