Homeowners Financial Group Delivers the Best of Both Worlds with Encompass Consumer Connect

The challenge

Homeowners Financial Group is a dominant force in mortgage lending, with a $1.5 billion annual loan volume and 40 branches spread throughout 14 states. But, as much as the organization has grown, the one thing that hasn’t changed is their unwavering belief that people are at the core of its success.

“As an 85 percent purchase lender, with all of our loans self-sourced through referrals and our own networks, human relationships are everything,” said Brandon Durham, product support manager for Homeowners Financial Group USA, LLC.

Keeping those relationships strong is one of the reasons that Homeowners Financial Group was an early adopter of Encompass Consumer Connect®.

The solution

According to Durham, a number of factors set Consumer Connect apart.

“A lot of online applications are written in industry jargon. Consumer Connect lets us utilize an easy to understand interview-style application, with icons that help guide the borrower through the process,” he said. “The online application drives a lot of business to us and the enhancements we’ve added enables the borrower to move through the application process in less than 10 minutes.”

For example, Homeowners Financial Group recently added automated verification options for employment, income, and assets.

“Borrowers have the opportunity to enter the information manually, or opt-in to have our integrated partners automatically pull their records from their financial institution,” Durham explained. “We’ve automated three of the most critical aspects of getting a loan; ones that often require borrowers to dig through records or make a trip to their bank to deliver.”

Another big time-saver is Consumer Connect’s borrower portal, the centralized point-of-contact between the loan officer and the customer, accessible through desktop, laptop, or mobile device.

“It’s a great, secure tool for delivering and receiving documents to and from the customer electronically,” Durham said. “Our customers can eSign loan documents and upload them from any device. It makes the process of obtaining a mortgage loan much simpler.”

While most competing solutions are “one size fits all,” Consumer Connect is highly customizable, so every company using the platform can make it their own.

“You can customize the configuration for each and every aspect of the platform in minutes,” Durham said. “If there’s additional data you want to ask for, you can add it in. If there’s a drop-down you don’t need, you can uncheck that box to hide it.”

For example, Durham disabled some of the self-serve features, like ordering credit. Instead, he linked the borrower to a loan officer at that point.
“We wanted to automate it to a point, but then have a person step in, so we stay true to our relationship/referral model. But, we still use mobile to facilitate the loan from beginning to end,” Durham said. “With this hybrid approach, we can give our clients the best of both worlds.”

The results
In the two years that Homeowners Financial Group has been using Consumer Connect, it has realized some significant results.

Increased online adoption
Since rolling out Consumer Connect, the company has seen a steady increase in the number of customers who prefer some sort of online interaction.

“We’ve seen a seven percent increase in online applications, which is a testament to the user friendliness of Consumer Connect and how well it works across different devices,” Durham said.

A full 98.7 percent of borrowers opted in for eDisclosures and eSign. And, between June 2019 and August 2019 alone, a whopping 52 percent of online applicants choose the automated employment, asset, and income verification option.

Reduced loan cycle times
The influx of online applications, in combination with more consumers submitting and signing documents online have had a positive impact on the lending cycle.

“Doing business with our customers electronically shortens our closing window,” Durham said. “We’ve reduced our applications to closing docs out cycle time by 1.5 days and our application to funding times by 1.1 days. We have actually closed loans in less than 10 business days, which we couldn’t do before.”

Increased productivity
Streamlining the loan process has made everyone involved more productive.

“In August 2019, we had our all-time highest funding volume in our 15½ year history, and we handled it with the same amount of staff,” Durham said.

Enhanced borrower experience
Most importantly, Consumer Connect helps Homeowners Financial Group give its borrowers a customer experience that makes them raving fans for life.

“With our referral model, we can’t just close loans, we have to wow everyone,” Durham said. “Consumer Connect gives us that edge.”