

A case study of a user centered design effort by Chase Citrowski

Client: Real Estate Roadmap

Industry: Real Estate Technology

Deliverables: Product Strategy, Information Architecture,
UX/UI Design, Wireframe, Prototype, Visual Design

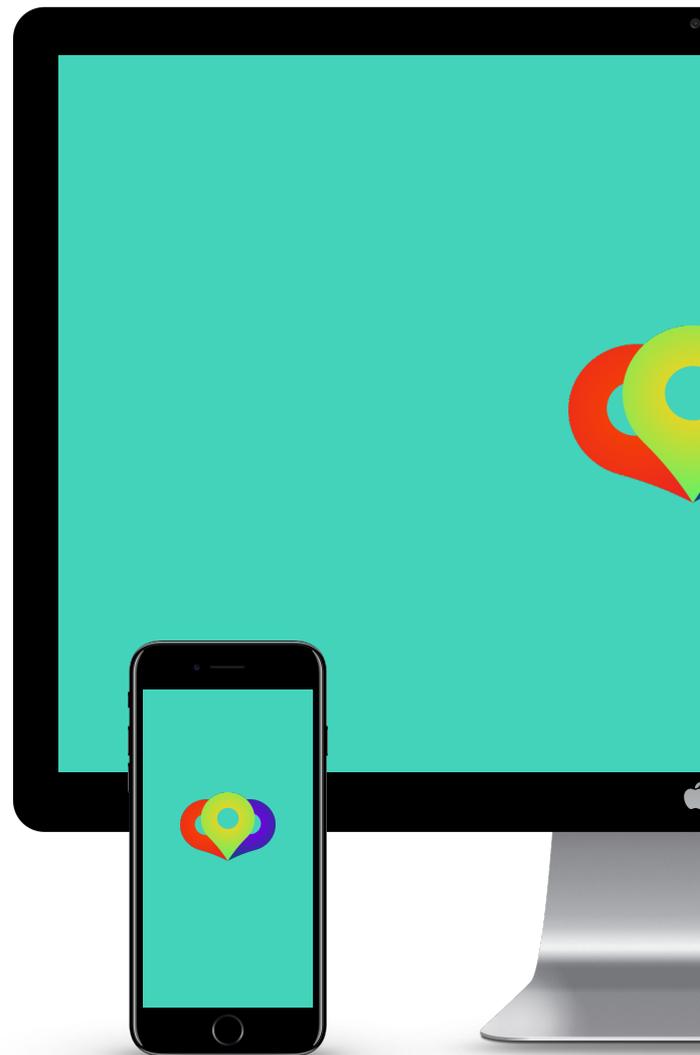


BACKGROUND

Real Estate Roadmap is a platform that enables real estate professionals to dramatically accelerate and simplify real estate transactions.

Real Estate Roadmap was the brain child of co-founder's Carrie Wernecke and Chase Citrowski after having grown frustrated with the real estate industry's antiquated technologies and methodologies which slow processes, frustrate clients, and lack effective information security measures.

Real Estate Roadmap offers clients optimal transparency throughout the buying or selling process and ensures they are in sync with their agent. The platform accelerates contractual and transaction processes, simplifies workflows, and streamlines communication and contract management.



CHALLENGE

Buying or selling property can be an arduous and emotionally charged experience, considering real estate purchases are often the largest a client will make. Combine these stressors with disjointed workflows and you have a recipe for unnecessary problems and less than stellar experiences.

At the onset, we knew we had to focus on delivering greater efficiency and customization via easy-to-use, reliable technology, to produce a definitive real time checklist keeping everyone on the same page every step of the way.

With large competitors like Zillow looking to make real estate professionals irrelevant our goal was to enhance professionals involved, not replace them.

What happens next?

Am I missing anything?

I'm sorry to have to ask

What do you need from me

Is this secure?

Who?

Broken email chains

I'll get to that when I'm at my computer

What part are we at?

USER RESEARCH + IA

We began our research by detailing our past transactions, capturing the workflows from begin to end, and standardizing nomenclature to establish a clear baseline. With these preliminary areas, we began our research in the field. Starting at a single office, we began collecting data at sales meetings and cataloguing our findings during white board sessions. Once we had established more detailed questions, moved on to more dynamic methods of surveying real estate professionals, buyers, and sellers. Our site visits expanded to private open houses, public open houses, and office tours.

After capturing and cataloguing data for 6 weeks, several pain points became clear.

“Agents
should
be able to
prescribe
Xanax.”

Subject: Real Estate Broker

Location: Denver, CO

Site: Broker Focus Group

Date: November 14, 2016

PAIN POINTS

1. Communication breakdown

In 2017, real estate professionals are in the midst of broken email chains and the uncomfortable position of adding one-off contacts to their personal contacts list. There is constant worry of documenting communication to limit liability, and a new threat of fraudsters intercepting communication and stealing your clients information or money. This ultimately leaves clients uneasy, skeptical, and frustrated.

2. Not mobile

Real estate is practiced in the field, not behind a desk. Current tools and methods are simply not optimized to make this work convenient or efficient.

3. Information isn't accessible

Information lives across multiple platforms and is not simple to access. Many key metrics are not captured or available for analysis leaving the professionals and clients in a data desert when the place is swimming in information.

USER PERSONAS

We created personas to reflect those whom we observed.



Art Weingärtner,
Listing Agent

*17 years in real estate,
15m annual volume*

Art's family has been in real estate for years and has a background in finance. Art wants to be able to handle more deals at once without sacrificing his service to clients. Uses a Google Pixel, and is always on Facebook.



Bonnie Rumsfield,
Buyers Agent

*4 years in real estate,
8m annual volume*

Bonnie is constantly looking for ways to differentiate and grow her business. An early adaptor, she has a YouTube channel, an iPhone X, and adopted Slack and Google Drive to communicate with her clients.



Werner Klopek,
Seller

Downsizing

Werner is a widower and is downsizing from a home he built with his wife. Being a private individual and depending on the proceeds from the sale to live on, he wants to know what is going on when at all times. He uses an iPhone 4, which was his daughters, mainly to check the news and talk with family.



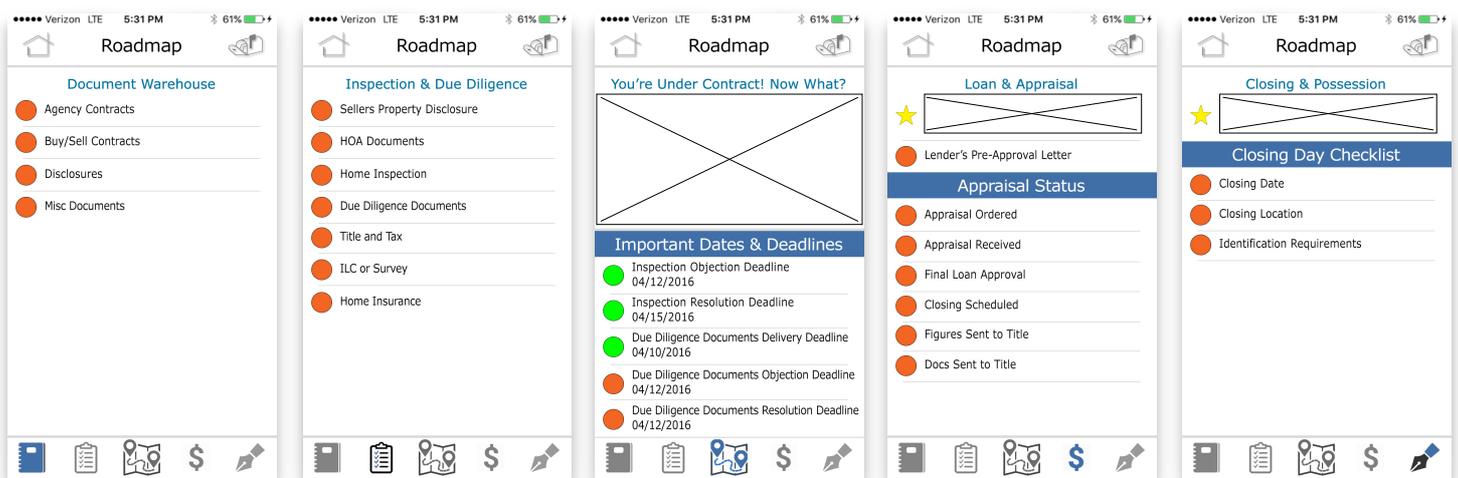
Richard Butler,
Buyer

First time homebuyer

Richey is a insurance agent who only communicates through text. He wants to show off his new house to his friends and expects his real estate agent to take care of most things, thats what he is paying them for. He used his iPhone 8 Plus to live stream houses when on tour.

IDEATION

Starting with low fidelity mock ups, we began validating our initial assumptions and workflows against our user personas. Who would like what or stumble where.



It became clear, we initially underestimated how integral a robust messaging systems was going to be to the remainder of the platform. Having integrated messaging we could more effectively leverage user profiles and push notifications. The transaction became much more transparent the more we could keep people in constant contact. The secret sauce we were coming across was the need for a place for the clients mind to pine by creating a single definitive source for information throughout the deal.

PROTOTYPING

With our first validated workflows established, I booted up Photoshop and Sketch to get working on the style guide and initial visual design. Next was to stitch it together with Craft and inVision, individual screens quickly turned into complete wireframes with the first UI delivered in 7 days.

We would constantly use our prototype to adjust or confirm assumptions and would go through workflows as our personas. By drilling down, we created an MPV build book to send out to developers for proposals.

Professionals in real estate are marketed to constantly - we get it. It wasn't until we had a high fidelity prototype that we were able to consistently convert early research prospects into committed testers.



TAKEAWAYS

The time of the information gatekeeper has passed, but real estate is stuck.

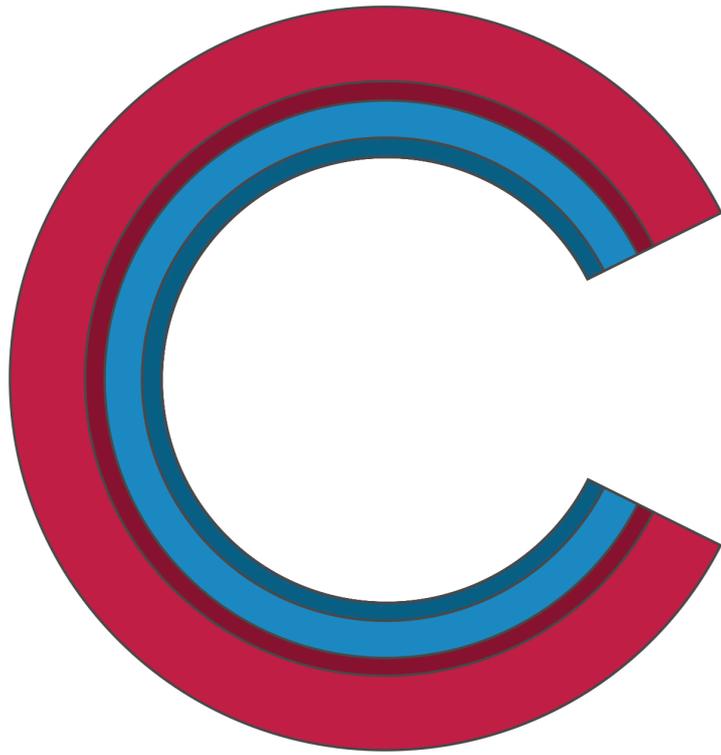
Looking under the hood of the real estate industry enlightened me to how the reputation it has, was earned. People with limited skill sets are expected to be able to consistently excel in multiple disciplines with swaths of different people. When things slip through the cracks, there is one person it comes back on and they pay by reputation and loss of the referrals.

I look forward to seeing Real Estate Roadmap's adoption in the market, and empowering the modern client who has come to expect so much more.

For more information about Real Estate Roadmap, visit them at:

<https://www.re-roadmap.com>

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Would you like to know more?

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