

Date: December 11, 2003
To: All Clients
From: David Gorenstein, President
Re: Public Relations/Title Insurance

Bulletin Bulletin Bulletin Bulletin Bulletin

“We can examine title, perfect title and solve sophisticated real estate transactions, but we have not developed an effective manner of telling the consumer what we do and why its done. Perhaps this is because what title insurance does for the consumer is provide peace of mind by eliminating title problems.”- Thomas P. Moonan, NYSTLA President

The above quote simple sums up the need for title insurance. Our industry has been under siege recently, by the media and the Department of Housing & Urban Development.

The enclosed booklet has been developed by our association and presents to the reader an easy guide to why title insurance is necessary. Kindly photocopy same and hand it out to all your real estate clients.

Also enclosed is an article further explaining our public awareness campaign.

Hopefully, we will be able to develop and effective communication with the consumer so that the importance of the title insurance policy will be better understood. Your thoughts and comments would be appreciated.

Please email david@choicfamily.com

inside the industry

NYSLTA Launches Public Awareness Campaign

by Brian H. Madden

Question: Can a first ever public relations/public awareness campaign by a state title association hope to reach over 12 million people with a budget of under \$50,000 in less than one year?

Answer: Yes! If you are the New York State Land Title Association, Inc.

As the New York State Land Title Association prepared to enter 2003, its executive committee recognized a need for public relations. The media was on a feeding frenzy to discredit the title industry. Unfortunately, there were a couple of disreputable companies whose actions were fodder for this attack. Those actions, coupled with national columnists and HUD's proposed RESPA reform, created a negative atmosphere concerning our industry in New York.

The first step taken by NYSTLA was to create a public relations

committee. Its charge was to implement a statewide public relations/public awareness campaign utilizing a multipronged approach targeting our membership, the media, the business and residential communities, and related industries. The committee approached its task like all good committees—it hired an expert.

the major media markets in the state; experience in our industry or similar ones; an understanding of the inner workings of our state capital; and a willingness to have our campaign be proactive rather than reactive. The committee interviewed eight firms and selected Condor East Communications, Inc., headed by its president, Deb Hollander.

Deb's plan was genius in its simplicity. We would use those media sources that were discrediting us to promote us. But first we had to be ready. The officers and certain committee chairs, together with representatives from around the state, went through a full day of intensive media training with individual and regional follow-up. Next we needed a slogan, a one-sentence statement that would communicate our purpose. Dozens were proposed, but one caught our attention: "Title Insurance: Protecting Your Piece of the Planet." The chair of our agents committee, Shawn Abrams, now NYSLTA president-elect, is credited with the slogan. By the way, some thought the slogan should be "Title Insurance: Protecting Your Piece of New York," but we New Yorkers rarely think in such a parochial manner.

Well-trained to now speak with the media, slogan in hand, the public relations committee went on the offense. Key statewide media print outlets were targeted for editorial board meetings. Letters to the Editor by our president Sal Turano left no doubt—we meant business. If the print media were going to comment



on our industry, we made it clear with our message: Have the facts straight and contact the only statewide title association. Intensive research was done on each of the major print media outlets to show their misunderstanding of title insurance. When this research was presented, it always came with an offer to inform and educate.

By March 2003 none other than the *New York Times* used the New York State Land Title Association as an industry expert and resource for an article by its real estate columnist Jay Romano. The column, "When Taxes on a Home Are Overdue," quoted NYSLTA Legislative Committee Chair Jonathan A. Richards extensively.

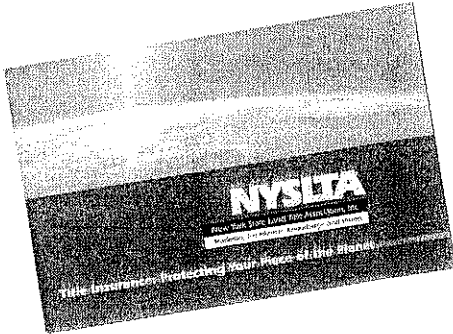
Conveying PR efforts and successes to the membership has always been a priority. *The Bulletin*, the association's quarterly newsletter, featured a reprint of the *New York Times* article. A new column called "Bridges" was introduced to inform our members of our PR efforts.

This was only the beginning. The need for an easy-to-understand, informative brochure for use by consumers and affiliated industries was also necessary. Our public relations committee, and Deb

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committee. Its charge was to implement a statewide public relations/public awareness campaign utilizing a multipronged approach targeting our membership, the media, the business and residential communities, and related industries. The committee approached its task like all good committees—it hired an expert.

The committee wanted an outside PR firm that had close contacts with



"Title Insurance: Protecting Your Piece of the Planet" is the tagline for all of NYSLTA's public awareness campaign materials.

Hollander and her staff created the brochure. It was unveiled at our annual convention in August. (See brochure photo on this page.) Every member of the association received ten brochures free, to be used as an educational and promotional tool. Within weeks the association had requests for thousands of additional copies. There's a chance these

additional sales will recover all our costs related to the brochure.

With the brochure in launch, our media-trained public relations committee members went on the road with our PR firm to target print media outlets. The first media tour encompassed three major markets: Syracuse, Rochester, and Buffalo. As a result, positive articles appeared, often for the first time.

In New York we do not view public relations efforts as an initiative as much as a campaign. We see the need to be proactive, and with proper training we can react when needed.

Our plans for 2004 include continuing media training, nurturing positive relationships with the media, researching previous articles, and putting forth accurate information about our industry to our detractors. We hope to be able to work with local TV and cable networks as an

additional medium to promote our industry as well as continuing our regional media tours. We are even thinking of a display booth we can use at related industry conventions and meetings.

Our goal next year is to reach more than 12 million people while not greatly increasing our budget. It will take many volunteer hours by our membership, who will continue to work closely with our PR firm. It is well worth the effort. There is no doubt of the ongoing benefit of public relations.

Brian H. Madden is public relations committee chair of the New York State Land Title Association, Inc.