



SUCCESS STORY

Finding Bad Agents Before They Ruin Good Deals

For the uninitiated, it probably comes as a surprise to learn that there's no central database for real estate in the United States. In the age of Google, smartphones, and commercial space travel, surely there must be an efficient way to query crucial information about any listing, agent, or brokerage firm... right? Especially with all the money and time on the line!

Unfortunately, "efficient" is not the word we'd use to describe the state of data in modern-day US real estate. At least, not yet (we're working on it!).

At Cloud Pacific, we don't think the shortfalls of the current MLS system are an excuse to shrug our shoulders and accept the kinds of discrepancies that can eat up revenue, destroy good deals, and even jeopardize our clients' real estate licenses.

That's why we've successfully leveraged Salesforce to solve two nagging data-driven issues for our biggest billion-dollar Hawaii real estate client.

To help illustrate these problems and the solutions we created, we'd like to introduce you to Joe.



PRESSING PROBLEM

We need to talk about Joe

Imagine you're a real estate developer in Hawaii, and you're trying to close on a building of around 700 condo units. Over the past few years, you've overseen construction, you've coordinated with your brokerage firm, and you've amassed tens of thousands of pages of paperwork from your hundreds of buyers. The deposits are down, and it's time to close with around a half a billion dollars on the line.

Everything seems poised for success... Then, enter Joe.

Joe is just one of the hundreds of agents repping the 700 buyers moving into your newest luxury venture, but he's special, because he's about to ruin your entire day (or even your entire year). For reasons known only to Joe, he defrauded some of his clients and bought a lime green jet ski in the six months since the buyer he represents put a deposit down on your soon-to-be-closed condo.





Now, unbeknownst to you, Joe's fraud has caused him to fall out of good standing, and his real estate license has been reclassified as "inactive." It's no longer legal for you to close the previously perfect deal you made with Joe's buyer, but with the current state of MLS data in US real estate, it isn't easy for you to catch when this happens to any of the hundreds of agents representing your 700 buyers either. And of course Joe's not going to tell you what happened himself. He's busy overcompensating at the beach.

So you accidentally close an illegal deal with Joe's buyer, and that leads to immediate penalties. You could be fined. You could lose revenue as deals fall through. You could have a hold put on your real estate license, or (worst case scenario) have it revoked.

For a billion-dollar real estate developer like you, those license problems mean that entire teams could be frozen for weeks, put on probation and unable to sell. This can delay or even destroy your financial plans, sending catastrophic waves rippling throughout your workflow... all thanks to Joe's mid-life crisis.



SALESFORCE SOLUTION

Spotting Red Flags Before They Become Red Alerts

When Cloud Pacific was approached by Hawaii's largest real estate developer, they were extremely concerned about their persistent "bad agent" problem. The broken state of MLS data meant that "inactive" agents (like our hypothetical Joe) kept slipping through the cracks during deals that included hundreds of agents representing hundreds of buyers. It looked like the penalty hammer was going to come down soon, and the Senior VP was starting to sweat.

Acting fast, Cloud Pacific dove into Salesforce for a custom-coded solution, and when we resurfaced, we ended up solving two problems at once. Here's how:

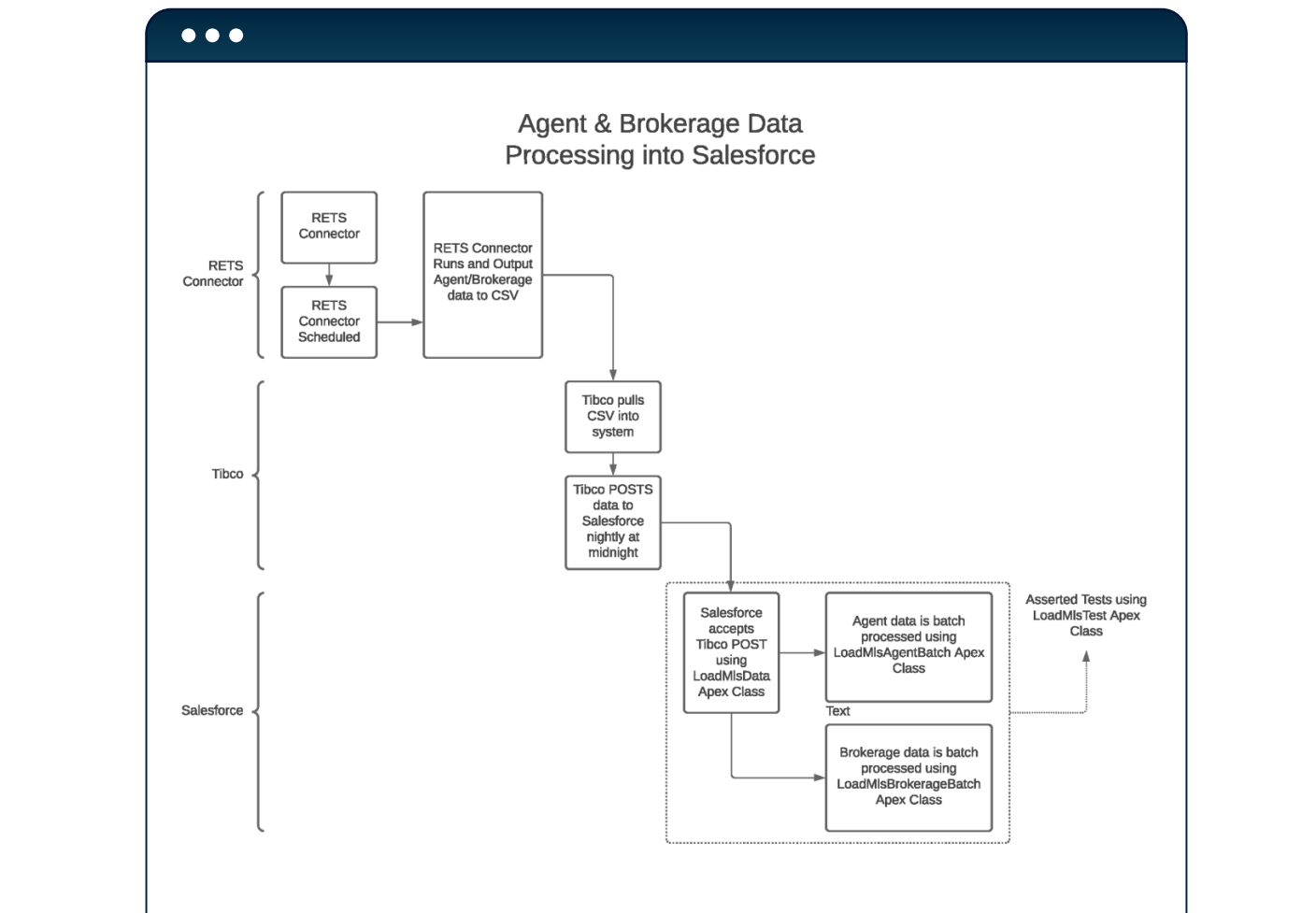
MLS (Multiple Listing Services) are the go-to databases if you're buying an apartment, condo, or house. Sites like Zillow pull their specifics from MLS databases, with each listing having its own assigned MLS number. These MLS numbers identify each listing's database record, which holds all the available info on the building, including the broker and brokerage.

There's presently an organization working to centralize all MLS data, but they're far from finished. At the time of this writing, only about 40% of MLS data occupies a central, accessible database. The rest is scattered amongst individual, often county-based MLS databases. These small MLS databases might be for one county with a thousand homes, or even less.

While investigating what we could do for our client, Cloud Pacific found that Honolulu County was all on one MLS! This was lucky, because it meant we wouldn't have to merge several databases to give our client access to a comprehensive data set... but it wasn't time to celebrate yet.

The Honolulu County MLS data may have all been in one place, but the only way to access it was through a paid legacy desktop software program called RETS Connector. Our client paid a monthly subscription fee to download a dense spreadsheet of data with no efficient way to parse it. Retro!





Every day, the RETS Connector would output a spreadsheet of data into a folder. To remove any chance of a problematic agent slipping through, Cloud Pacific architected a solution to use a script that could locate relevant agent status information within this bulk spreadsheet, organize and package that data, and then POST it to a middleware database.

The middleware could then redirect the packaged data and POST it to Salesforce daily. In Salesforce, we built a REST Resource to accept the POST from the middleware, and check all of the agents against all the agents representing buyers in Salesforce to see if they were in good standing.

Agents revealed to be inactive were automatically flagged and had their statuses updated, with an instant alert then sent to the owner of that opportunity.

This method proved to be so effective for our client that they asked if it could be adapted to solve a second issue: Brokerage Discrepancies.

Agents change brokerage firms all the time, but if Joe is an agent with company X when he starts a deal with one of our client's condo buyers, then he decides to switch to company Y before the deal is closed, technically the sale is still with company X. If payment then ends up with company Y... you guessed it, we're talking about penalties again. Leveraging the incredible flexibility of Salesforce, Cloud Pacific was able to swiftly adapt the system we'd created to check that agents were in good standing to also identify agents who had switched brokerages mid-deal.

This combo-move, a one-two punch of Salesforce Solutions effectively "Joe-Proofed" our client's transactions, ensuring that there is never another billion-dollar deal that gets derailed by the occasional bad apple agent.