

In the Zone

When asked to spearhead the Houston/Gulf Coast CCIM Chapter's Web site redesign, Colin Fox, CCIM, president of Colin Fox & Associates in Houston, wanted the site "to provide more relevance and value to both our broker and non-broker members in their everyday transactional activities," he says.

With this goal in mind and under Fox's leadership, the chapter implemented Argus Zone transaction management software into the new www.ccimhouston.org site and extended free, one-year licenses to all chapter members. This value-added benefit "helps [members] manage costs and be more productive with documents, spreadsheets, and discussion of everyday business life," he says.

Valuable Features

Developed by Argus Software, Argus Zone is a global Web-based portal that provides commercial real estate professionals with a variety of features, including virtual deal rooms, collaborative space for online meetings, project management capabilities, and an online networking platform. Chapter members can participate in Argus Zone's weekly user-education Webinars to learn how to maximize the software's different features.

The Houston/Gulf Coast chapter encourages individual members as well as non-members (non-member licenses can be purchased for \$50 per month) to use the Argus Zone platform as an intranet and extranet for their transactions. Through the online portal, members can share data in a secure environment and manage documents, version tracking, forms, approvals, workflow,

and content generated through daily transactional activities.

Members also can interact with



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other users in Argus Zone's various online forums, market their commercial property listings, and retrieve and post industry reporting templates such as appraisal reports and executive summaries. Confidentiality is a key benefit of the platform, making it "really convenient since you can share financial reports," Fox says. Marketing is another valuable resource. "Users can expose their properties through their network and use the portal as a marketing tool."

International Appeal

With his large number of international clients, Fox finds Argus Zone to be an excellent platform for inbound and outbound transactions. "My company conducts a lot of business between the U.S. and United Kingdom where we have an office.

The portal allows me to share all the due diligence documents online," he says. "It would be impossible to send all these files in one e-mail because of the large size of these documents." As an alternative, Fox sends users a link to a secure area on Argus' site.

Argus Zone has enhanced transaction activities following the recent recruitment of Evgeny Andreev, CCIM, from Jones Lang LaSalle, Moscow, Fox says. Fox and Andreev are working together "with high net-worth Russian investors who are interested in buying investment properties in the U.K. and U.S." Fox's new Russian colleague is working with Argus Zone's developers to translate the interface into Russian, furthering the developer's objective of providing a global network exchange. Argus Zone currently provides platforms in English, French, Japanese, and German.

But Fox points out that the day-to-day management features of the platform are relevant for any commercial real estate professional. Users can export their to-do lists

into Microsoft Outlook and share information such as data and critical deadlines with colleagues, Fox explains. In addition, "I can control who sees what documents as well as track which parties have viewed materials and when."

The most important advantage of the Argus Zone platform is that it allows commercial real estate professionals to be proactive in the transaction process, Fox says. With the click of a mouse, users can send lenders, buyers, or other relevant parties all transaction-related documents, including due diligence materials without extra attachments. "It's great for the execution in that [all transaction documents] are in one place," Fox concludes.

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