

MORTGAGE SERVICES

CENTUM takes first steps in integration journey

CENTUM's new mortgage calculator on Century 21 Canada's website is an important step forward in its integration with sister companies

CENTUM FINANCIAL GROUP INC. is taking its first steps toward more closely integrating with its sister companies, with everyone hoping to benefit.

"If these tough times prove anything, it's that you really, really need to consider additional revenue streams in your mortgage business. Full stop," said CENTUM Financial Group Inc. president Chris Turcotte, who spoke with *CMP* recently from his Vancouver-area home office.

That's why, using integration, CENTUM is part of the solution to ensuring property owners get the most out of their properties,

so that each brand can benefit from cross-selling synergies," he said. The dream was always that, one day, technology would allow for integration opportunities.

CENTUM adds new calculator to roster

On July 28, CENTUM launched a mortgage calculator on the Century 21 Canada website.

"It's really like nothing the industry's ever seen before on a real estate site," Turcotte said. "Our calculator is just on another level."

CENTUM's closing-cost calculator is another addition; its approach sees the online

"They see great value to consumers on the tools," Turcotte said. The calculators are also sponsored by CENTUM, and "of course, there's a click-through to our brand. That is our very first live and real integration stuff."

Century 21 Canada gets more than 500,000 unique visitors every month, according to Turcotte's latest look at Google Analytics. And that's in a down market. So that's hundreds of thousands who will see the calculators brought to them by CENTUM. And while a potential client is clicking around, they can also select a mortgage advisor to help them on their journey.

"It's a gateway to the brand," Turcotte said.

But how else will real estate professionals benefit from this integration?

"Century 21 agents are not paying for all these tools and resources," Turcotte said. "The CENTUM side is not paying for the exposure. That's true integration."

Marketing has its place, but these calculators connect people who have at least a passive interest in a new home to people who can manage their properties, get them a mortgage, etc.

Next steps in the integration journey

In the coming months there will be AB testing, and assessment of consumer traffic behaviour to monitor how well the calculators are doing.

"The whole point of doing that is to make sure that we can raise our penetration rate to ultimately generate mortgage leads for agents," Turcotte said. "It's about providing tools and resources for consumers looking to understand the real estate transaction, but with that same spirit of being a helping hand."



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making life easier for them at the same time.

CENTUM is part of Charwood Pacific Group (CPG), also based in Vancouver, which includes companies like CPG Real Estate Group, Century 21 Canada, and Real Property Management.

Having all this talent under one roof creates a whole real estate ecosystem. When it comes to property, especially investment properties, "we can help buy and sell them, finance them, and then we can manage them," Turcotte said.

Technology has finally evolved to the point where CENTUM can "create an environment

journey through the eyes of a real estate buyer.

"You're just trying to figure out how does this whole buying a house thing work," Turcotte said. "We came at it from that angle."

The site also boasts a purchasing calculator and a maximum-mortgage calculator.

"Oftentimes, people will look for the house they like, and then they'll go see if they qualify," Turcotte said. But the tools also let buyers see the maximum price they can buy for, giving their search more realistic budgetary boundaries.

While it's early days yet, Century 21 franchisees have been effusive in their praise.



“We’re not going to talk. We’re going to execute”

Chris Turcotte, Centum Financial Group Inc.

There will be more integration news this fall, but Turcotte stressed that CENTUM was taking its time to get it right. One upcoming innovation will be to expand the integration of local Century 21 locations with local CENTUM agents and teams.

“We feel like we’ve really come up with a model that encourages both sides to integrate,” Turcotte said.

The first two Century 21 offices to integrate with a CENTUM franchise are already working together. “And a really high level of CENTUM integration is ultimately what we envision,” he said.

“I’m really excited because I couldn’t have picked two better franchisees that

understand the broader vision, what integration means.”

Integration solution for property investors

“With Real Property Management [RPM] integrated with a CENTUM location, things get really interesting,” Turcotte explained.

He put forward this scenario for CENTUM’s integration with RPM, which has 300 doors under management. Each one of those doors will require a mortgage, as well as property management. Both of those needs can be handled through the planned integration – everything from collection of rent to cutting the grass, to recommending

repairs to increase the property value.

Then there’s CENTUM’s mortgage company. As part of the package, “we’re always going to make sure you pay the lowest amount on renewal,” Turcotte said. “We’re going to keep an eye on this via our auto-evaluation API, and if there’s an opportunity where you have enough equity to refinance and potentially buy another revenue property, you’re not using any of your own money.”

Back to the 300-doors example. Imagine knowing when all their renewal dates are coming up and being able to farm out those mortgage renewals in-house?

“You don’t mind being competitive on a renewal rate, because you had zero cost of acquisition,” Turcotte said. “You should be able to get almost every single renewal.”

With the property management company, the client knows that the properties have been maintained to a professional standard and have increased their equity. That equity can then be used as a downpayment on the next revenue property, meaning not having to pay anything out of pocket. Which then means that the property management company will get another door to add to its rosters and the mortgage company another mortgage (purchase and refinance), with the knock-on effects from there. That’s not to mention the fully qualified buying referral that’s generated for a real estate agent.

“By identifying one potential refinance lead, we’ve set off five transactions,” Turcotte said.

There is plenty of talk in business, according to Turcotte. Which makes CENTUM the strong, silent type.

“We’re not going to talk; we’re going to execute, and you’re going to see that over the coming months more and more,” he promised. “It’s important to see who is talking and who is executing. Talk can be powerful, but it’s really cheap.”

It can be easy to “look like a hero” during the good times, but during hard times it’s wise to look to companies like CENTUM that are continuing to push the envelope. Turcotte encourages interested parties to “reach out, and we’re happy to tell the story and how you can be involved in it. So leave the execution to us.” **CMF**