Announcing the 2018 Inman Innovator Award winners

The annual Inman Innovator Awards honor the creative companies, organizations and individuals pushing the boundaries of the real estate industry and achieving new feats.

In 2018, with an industry full of dynamic initiatives, ideas and personalities, it was more difficult than ever to narrow that list down to just a few finalists and winners.

Still, after much deliberation and debate, the Inman staff selected the runners-up and top honorees. At our Inman Connect San Francisco conference on Thursday, founder and publisher Brad Inman took to the stage of the Hilton Hotel Union Square to announce the winners of the Inman Innovator Awards of the Year 2018 in the following categories. View the full list of winners and finalists here.

Innovators of the Year

Winner: Thad Wong, co-founder, @properties

Thaddeus Wong is the co-founder of @properties, the largest independently owned residential real estate brokerage firm in Illinois and one of the 12 largest brokerage firms in the U.S. by sales volume.

Winner: Amy Bohutinsky, COO, Zillow Group

Yes, there is such a thing as too much real estate tech

Brokerages that pile on the tech might be hurting their business READ MORE

Amy Bohutinsky is chief operating officer of Zillow Group, a portfolio of the largest and most vibrant real estate and home-related brands on Web and mobile, including consumer brands Zillow, Trulia, StreetEasy, HotPads and Naked Apartments.

Real estate technology

Winner: Kelle App

Kelle is a personal assistant, but “she” operates beyond the scope of a Siri or an Alexa to help agents manage their deals. The app helps Keller Williams agents answer questions, manage referrals, check their progress against career goals and much more.

First Runner Up: WFG’s MyHome

WFG’s MyHome is an online portal that connects agents and homebuyers with the search and escrow process, outlining every step of the journey and documenting when it was completed. It’s available in all markets where WFG (Williston Financial Group) has title offices.

Second Runner Up: HouseCanary

HouseCanary builds predictive analytics products for home valuation and uses them to help streamline the transaction process. The company’s Agile Appraisal product uses big data to give an appraiser a solid foundation for appraisal, highlighting any property anomalies that require human attention, bifurcating the process so humans can use data to make better decisions.

Company

Winner: Redfin

Redfin was the first real estate brokerage to offer an iBuyer pilot. It’s testing a program that allows homeowners to instantly sell a property to Redfin, controlling the transaction process, for as little as a 7 percent commission.

First Runner Up: Compass

Compass has a plan to capture 20 percent market share in the 20 top real estate markets by 2020; it plans to do this by supporting top-producing agents with new tech tools, including a CRM, targeted digital marketing, solar-powered signage and other cutting-edge resources.

Second Runner Up: Purplebricks

Purplebricks made its U.S. debut in California after establishing itself as a leading flat-fee real estate startup in the United Kingdom and Australia. It secured a $177 million investment before expanding its stateside launch to New York.

Broker

Winner: Glenn Sanford, eXp Realty

EXp Realty is a virtual cloud-based real estate brokerage that may be one of the fastest-growing companies in the country by agent count. With virtual offices in lieu of brick-and-mortar locations and offering a unique equity-sharing arrangement, the firm uses technology to connect to its agents and to help close transactions.

First Runner Up: Jonathan Boatwright, Realty Austin

As co-founder, co-owner and chief technology officer of Realty Austin, Jonathan Boatwright has built a custom system on top of the popular Salesforce platform, creating one of the most sophisticated CRM and lead-to-sales machines in real estate.

Second Runner Up: Kendall Butler, F.L.I. Properties

Kendall Butler develops F.L.I. Properties' tech in-house and uses her analytic and market expertise to solve problems and bring value to the community. She's established herself as the market expert in the area and has grown her company by focusing on customers, data and results.

Agents

Winner: Jay O'Brien, Re/Max Prestige

Jay O'Brien's theory is that money spent on marketing could be better spent on client experience, and he puts that money where his mouth is by investing in tools and services that make his clients love him for life.

First Runner Up: Lauren Taylor, Big Block Realty

As both a real estate agent and a Navy wife, Lauren Taylor intimately understands the real estate challenges that face military families. So she founded Savvy Homes Portal to help buyers look at properties from a distance using virtual reality technology.

Second Runner Up: Jeff Schween, Pacific Union

Since the Santa Rosa wildfires tore through communities in 2017, Pacific Union agent Jeff

Schween has been collaborating with local builders to help rebuild some of the custom homes that made Santa Rosa so beloved — but at scale and simultaneously to help homeowners better manage the rebuild cost.

MLS, Association or Industry Organization

Winner: The California Association of Realtors

The California Association of Realtors (C.A.R.) has committed to help elevate women in the industry through its WomanUP! initiative. It's hosted WomanUP! events and promoted the initiative cleverly with social media. C.A.R. also works to educate the real estate industry about the future of home sales with live-streamed panels featuring renowned experts who share their insights.

First Runner Up: The MLS Roundtable

Seven MLSs have joined forces in the MLS Roundtable, a think tank whose members include Bright MLS, CRMLS, MRED, RealTracs, Northwest MLS, MLS PIN and CarolinaMLS. Together they examine the challenges associated with implementing meaningful change and seek solutions to those challenges for the benefit of MLSs everywhere.

Second Runner Up: Houston Association of Realtors

When members speak, the Houston Association of Realtors listens: It voted unanimously to oppose a NAR dues increase of $30 after surveying members and finding that 97 percent did not support the rate hike.

Team

Winner: Amy Youngren, North Group

Amy Youngren's marketing and video strategies have helped her team capture market share in multiple cities in Canada. She's built her team into a top Keller Williams entity and one of the fastest-growing in the country.

First Runner Up: Chris Suarez, Xperience Real Estate

Chris Suarez built his business on his deep experience in real estate law and real estate sales, and he's crafted his team strategy around one-on-one agent training that helps elevate agents' strengths and minimize weaknesses. His team is now selling real estate in more than 30 cities.

Second Runner Up: Tim Heyl, Austin

The Heyl Group's growth has landed it on the Inc. list of fastest-growing companies, and Tim Heyl's status as a mega agent and his work at building a real estate training empire, in addition to his lead generation platform Phone Animal, has cemented the Heyl Group's dominance.

Marketing

Winner: Century 21 Rebrand

It's rare that a rebrand is so widely hailed as the best possible reiteration of a company, but Century 21's clean and sweeping rebrand was so sophisticated and modern that it was immediately accepted and celebrated throughout the real estate industry.

First Runner Up: My North Langley

This Instagram account dedicated to a suburb of Vancouver aims to highlight its beauty and hidden gems by posting a different photo of North Langley every day.

Second Runner Up: Jennifer Preddy Egbert Instagram Marketing

To make her name synonymous with "luxury Boulder real estate," Jennifer Preddy Egbert has built an Instagram feed that showcases the details in the uber-modern six-figure properties that have become her speciality in the People's Republic.

Nate Ellis Award

In memory of our good friend Nate Ellis*.*

Winner: Jay Thompson

Jay Thompson is the former director of industry outreach for Zillow, which operates the leading real estate and home-related marketplaces on mobile and the web.

Prior to joining Zillow in March of 2012, Thompson was the co-owner and designated broker of Thompson's Realty in Phoenix, Arizona. Thompson is a frequent speaker at local, state and national real estate conferences on topics ranging from brokerage management to social media marketing in real estate.

He built his real estate blog, PhoenixRealEstateGuy.com into one of the most widely read real estate blogs in the country and has contributed to numerous other real estate industry publications and websites.

Winner: Leslie Appleton-Young

Leslie Appleton?Young is vice president and chief economist for the California Association of Realtors (C.A.R.). Appleton?Young directs the activities of the Association's Member Information Team.

She oversees analysis of housing market and brokerage industry trends, broker relations and membership development activities. She is also closely involved in the association's strategic planning efforts and is a well?known speaker in California's real estate community.

Winner: Sara Sutachan

Sara Sutachan oversees industry relations, membership development and strategic initiatives for C.A.R. In this role she helps the association establish vision, identify new and emerging opportunities and relationships, and is responsible for implementing key strategic initiatives.

Sutachan is closely involved in the association's strategic planning efforts and is a well-known speaker in California's real estate community. Sutachan has a bachelor's degree from California State University, Northridge in business administration with concentrations in finance and real estate and a master's degree in economics from California State University, Los Angeles.

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Source: click here