

Waterstone Mortgage grows its business with Insights™ by ICE Mortgage Technology

Profile

- Waterstone Mortgage Corporation
- Pewaukee, Wisconsin
- \$3B annual loan volume

Challenge

Access current, relevant benchmark and industry data quickly and cost effectively.

Results

- Saves time
- Lowers costs
- Improves decision making
- Provides timely data—3–12 months prior to other options
- Increases data/definition consistency
- Drives marketing messaging

The challenge

Waterstone Mortgage didn't become a market leader by chance. Its leadership team is continually studying data, both to refine its own operations, and to benchmark how the company performs compared to the competition.

However, until recently, orchestrating that analysis wasn't easy—or fast.

“We received a monthly Origination Insight Report (OIR) from Ice Mortgage Technology that showed benchmark data for their customers, and summary observations about the industry—like loan pricing and times to close,” explained Tom Knapp, Senior Vice President, Chief Information Officer for Waterstone Mortgage. “We'd take this report and mash it up against our internal data, so we could compare our numbers to our competitors.”

It was a time-consuming process, but a valuable one. So, Knapp was willing to commit the resources each month into putting the analysis together.

When ICE Mortgage Technology introduced Insights, an easy-to-use application that put real-time industry and peer benchmarking data at its users' fingertips, it didn't take long for Knapp to get Waterstone Mortgage on board.

The solution

Now, every Monday morning, Knapp and his Business Intelligence team can pull up Insights and benchmark Waterstone's production for the following week against the collective production of other ICE Mortgage Technology clients.

“If you compare the timeliness and quality of Insights to the other industry data that's out there, it's pretty amazing,” explained Olga Rosales, Business Intelligence Manager for Waterstone Mortgage. “The GSE data that's available to everyone has a three-month lag; HMDA data comes out once a year. With Insights, we get enough statistical data on a weekly basis to show us exactly what we need to see—and, we can break it down by individual geographic areas.”

This continual peer comparison has become even more critical to Waterstone during the refinance boom of 2020–2021.

“Although we were doing record volumes in refi, our DNA is purchase transactions. We're built on Realtor relationships, referrals and getting borrowers into homes,” Knapp said. “So, even though we, like others, were riding the high tide, we wanted to make sure we continued to do better than the industry in regard to our purchase transactions—and ensure that our strategies, our marketing, and our relationships were still feeding that business.”

Because Waterstone is so focused on purchase business, the time-to-close metric is mission critical—and something the organization does very well. Knapp not only uses the benchmark data in Insights to confirm that the company continually closes faster than industry averages, but also funnels this information into Waterstone's marketing campaigns.

“We can go out to our referral partners and prospects and say, ‘If you have a purchase transaction and getting closed on time is

“Ultimately, we’re gathering the data that’s important to the organization and presenting it to people in real time.”

Tom Knapp
SVP and CIO
Waterstone Mortgage

important, Waterstone Mortgage is the place to be,” Knapp said. “It’s a market differentiator that we can back up with data.”

If there’s a category of performance or specific location that’s lacking, Waterstone executives have the data to identify if they need to course correct or if other lenders are trending down, as well, indicating a shift in the market.

“Because ICE Mortgage Technology owns a large share of the market, we know the data in Insights is a good representation of the industry,” Knapp said. “There aren’t a lot, if any, other providers that have the ability to mine their own data and have it be that representative of the entire market.”

The results

Since using Insights from ICE Mortgage Technology, Waterstone Mortgage has seen the benefits—and some impressive results.

Saves time and money

“If we didn’t have Insights, we’d have to go out and find the industry data and benchmark ourselves, and we’d have to pay for a lot of different sources,” Rosales said. “If you wanted GSE data for Freddie and Fannie, that’s a lot of work, and like a lot of industry data, it’s really centered around the investor, not the originator—and can be months behind.”

With Insights, Waterstone has updated benchmark and industry data weekly—without having to collect, combine and manipulate those individual data points. Everything’s ready to go.

Improves decision making

Waterstone executives have the up-to-date information they need for data-driven decision making.

“We can make pricing adjustments or other changes and measure the impact within that

first week,” Knapp said. “Insights enables us to quickly see the results of our actions.”

Increases data/definition consistency

According to Knapp, Insights also ensures that Waterstone Mortgage is consistently comparing apples to apples.

“There are probably 10 ways companies define time to close. We can refer to the data dictionary in Insights and get a clear picture on how it should be defined, so we make sure we’re measuring and comparing consistently,” Knapp said.

Provides metrics, at a glance, to the executive team, marketing and sales

Currently, Knapp and Waterstone’s Head of National Sales are weekly Insight users, and the data is used for regular reports to the Board of Directors. The plan is to start funneling this data to branch managers so they can stay on top of performance and utilize the data in their day-to-day operations.

“One of the things that we liked about the recent release of Insights was the Snapshots. It allows us to look at key performance indicators very quickly, and make decisions on what to drill down into and look at in additional detail,” Knapp said. “That information, and that speed of access, will be invaluable to our branches.”

For Knapp, the goal is to get everyone, organization-wide, harnessing the power of data.

“The data brings great perspective, but it’s really about being able to tell the story of what that data represents,” he said. “Insights does an exceptional job at bringing us the data, and Olga does a fantastic job of telling that story so we, as a company, can use that information to grow, to succeed, and to continue to be a leader.”