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## **Real estate and tech mingle at the Palace**

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Realtors, software gurus and everyone along in the real estate/technology spectrum swarmed the Palace Hotel this week in **San Francisco** at the 10th annual **Real Estate Connect conference**. Among the tidbits gleaned during a few hours spent there on Thursday: **AOL next week will launch a new version of its real estate offerings**. The new pages will feature lots of original editorial content, said **Samara Jaffe, AOL's director of careers and real estate**.

The new AOL real estate pages will be divided up into channels specific to different types of real estate customers: first-time buyers, vacation home buyers, investors, renters, etc. Of her competitors she said, "None of the sites really speak to first-time home buyers the way they need to be spoken to." Jaffe herself just bought her first home, so she's been through that confusing first-timer swirl.

I also had an interesting talk with **James Barry**, head of a North Carolina company called **Listingbook**. Barry himself is a newcomer to real estate, joining the six-year-old company just last year, but he's nonetheless adopted the fervor of a true believer when he talks about how Listingbook attempts to "reduce friction" in the real estate transaction -- in some part by eliminating the need for lots of phone calls.

It's an "agent-centric" online service where agents can **manage all their interactions with buyer and seller clients, and on which clients can search homes, report back to the agent online on which homes they liked, which they hated and why.** Sellers get reports on buyer feedback and open house activity. Agents and clients receive daily online reports on all the actions each took that day related to the house-hunt or sale.

There are lots of "client management" software products out there, but Barry boasts that Listingbook puts more tools all in one place than anyone else. Could be. Hopefully, I'll never be forced to demo each and every piece of client management software to find out if he's right. As it is, this product looked useful, at least.

And finally, **I didn't hear this directly myself, but ...** a fellow attendee at the conference told me that at some point during its presentation Wednesday, executives from **Zillow said that what the company really is, is not a real estate company, but an entertainment company.** So far, that seems about right. So when will they start selling popcorn we can eat while we settle in for a cozy evening of looking up other people's home values?