

# Attending the NAR Conference

*Why One Credit Union Leader Finds It Useful to Build Relationships with Real Estate Professionals*



Don Lickel

**D**on Lickel has served as Vice President of Mortgage Lending for Summit Credit Union since joining the Madison, Wisconsin-based credit union in March 2017. Lickel has more than 30 years of lending experience, most of which has been with banks. He says working in a credit union is “a new and wonderful experience.”

Lickel attended last year’s National Association of Realtors (NAR) Conference and Expo in Chicago. The three-day event attracted more than 19,000 Realtors nationwide. Attendance at many events is open only to Realtors, but the exhibition hall and its many exhibitors (including ACUMA’s booth), are open to all.

Lickel agreed to answer a few questions for the Pipeline about his reasons for attending the event.

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**Q: How long have you been attending the NAR Conference?**

**A:** I’ve attended the NAR Conference off and on for a number of years depending upon location and business circumstances. The Realtors in Madison have long been active in the Association and it’s great to participate and show support.

**Q: What were your impression of the NAR event?**

**A:** The event is huge and amazingly well run and organized. [ This past November it was held at the sprawling McCormick Place complex in Chicago. ] While it certainly is an opportunity to get together socially, it’s most definitely a working conference with lots of timely seminars and an expo with over 400 exhibitors. It is truly a global event with Realtors from all over the world in attendance.

**Q: How do you decide which Realtors to reach out to?**

**A:** I typically know many of the individuals who will be attending, and so I have spoken with them in advance and planned most of the get-togethers. It’s also a wonderful opportunity to meet and establish relationships with new folks.

**Q: What do you hope to accomplish in your meetings?**

**A:** The meetings are largely social and opportunities to catch up in a re-



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laxed setting, which is otherwise sometimes difficult with scheduling challenges. This is also an excellent way to show support for an organization that is critical to our success.

**Q: Have your efforts brought positive results?**

**A:** These meetings have opened the doors to new opportunities and also deepened many existing relationships. Even though we have always been very involved locally in Realtor activities and committees, attendance at this event shows that we are serious about our commitment to them and the industry.

At Summit, we also try and include Realtors in our homebuying events and seminars and look to establish good two way referral relationships.

**Q: In a larger sense, why is it important to have relationships with Realtors?**

**A:** Realtors are key to growing our member base. While we have excellent relationships with our members and stay in touch regularly Realtor relationships are responsible for a high percentage of our new purchase money mortgage business, and are a critical piece of our overall presence.



*Summit CU has more than 170,000 members and \$2.9 billion in assets, with 35 locations, and is the leading mortgage lender in Dane County, Wisconsin.*



## Working with the National Association of Realtors

### ACUMA Continues to Develop a Strong Relationship with NAR

**A**CUMA has made strides in working toward a stronger relationship with the National Association of Realtors on behalf of credit union mortgage lenders.

For example, ACUMA maintains a close working relationship with NAR's Director of Research, Jessica Lautz, and NAR's Director of Social Media and Speech Writing, T.J. Doyle. Lautz was a speaker at ACUMA's 2017 Fall Conference.

In addition, ACUMA has been an exhibitor for 15 years at the annual NAR Convention and Expo with a booth for "America's Credit Unions." In Chicago in November 2017, ACUMA occupied prime position at the entrance to the Exhibition Hall at McCormick Place.

"Continued effort and focus on Realtors is something I feel our members will find beneficial and strengthen ACUMA's overall Value Proposition," says ACUMA President Bob Dorsa.

Dorsa noted that credit union representatives at the booth "talk to hundreds of attendees" during the NAR Conference, "spreading the good word about credit unions and their potential for mortgage lending relationships."

Exemplifying the cooperative nature of credit unions, a number of ACUMA's members, CUs and related businesses have contributed to defray the costs of the booth.

During the NAR Conference, ACUMA also obtained and displayed several video clips from ACUMA members including Anheuser-Busch Employees' Credit Union, ORNL CU, ENT FCU, Digital CU and Baxter Credit Union. And Navy Federal Credit Union, one of the booth's sponsors, signed up more than a dozen new members during the convention.

A resource has also been added to the "Members Only" section of the ACUMA website. (Members must sign in to get the information.) It includes a folder listing the URL links for the primary subgroups and associations affiliated with the NAR, conveniently grouped by state.

