



SHIELD BROKERAGE

REPORT

Prepared by *c/c/g*
04/2017

Discovery & Market Positioning Report

ABOUT SHIELD BROKERAGE

Until now, there hasn't been a company with a concerted focus on both part-time real estate agents and home buyers and sellers. Shield Brokerage seeks to educate buyers and sellers about the inherent conflict of interest many miss, as well as provide part-time agents with an effective source of income. Shield agents will partner with full-time agents on the entire transaction process of buying and selling homes, always dedicated to preserving the best interest of buyers and sellers.

Competitor Analysis

OVERVIEW

While there is no known direct competition in terms of matching all the services provided by Shield Brokerage, competitors exist in the form of companies targeting part-time agents (Park and Refer, X Agents Refer), online companies in competition for buyers and sellers (Zillow, Redfin), and traditional agencies like Remax and Century 21. Even with differing levels of relevance, valuable insight can be gained from each.

MOST DIRECT COMPETITORS

PARK AND REFER

COMPANY OVERVIEW Park and Refer (P&R) offers the ability for part-time agent with an active real estate license to “park” their licenses and become a referral agent. The company serves six states. For a subscription fee, these agents can then keep their hard earned license active but not incur fees, as well as earn money from producing referrals that lead to transactions.

\$75 for 6 month subscription

\$125 for 1 year subscription

\$195 for 2 year subscription

Free 1 year renewal membership if you have a paid referral, and you can place your referral with the agent of your choice, anywhere in the world.

BRANDING STRENGTHS & WEAKNESSES While only working from a basic website template, P&R have done a better job of conveying what they do than X Agents Refer. They’ve highlighted “How It Works” and Testimonials, which are two key components of a company like this.

BRAND ANALYSIS Their logo is workable, but unmemorable. The icon conveys the idea of a house, but the concept as a whole doesn’t make sense to the average visitor. Their website does a decent job of drawing interest and explaining benefits, but continues to highlight the opportunity to earn free business cards, which is not a realistic sales driver for any company.

Their social media presence is weak and might as well be non-existent. They employ cheesy stock photography in their posts and appear to have no social strategy.



X AGENTS REFER

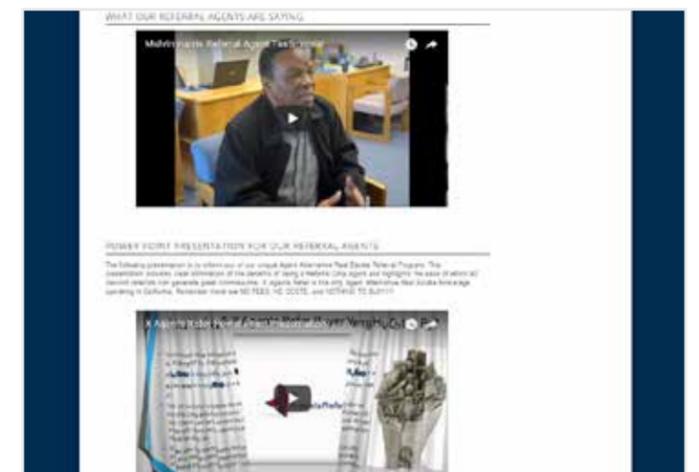
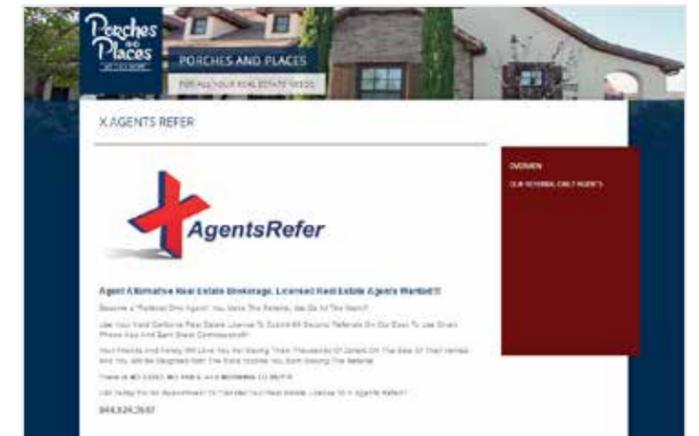
COMPANY OVERVIEW X Agents Refer is a lead generation service for the company’s own agents that offers extra income from referrals. It is part of the larger “Porches and Places” California real estate company. X Agents Refer is seeking to essentially have the user turn over their license and become a “referral only agent.” The company boasts 68 “referral only agents.”

BRANDING STRENGTHS & WEAKNESSES The appearance is that this is not a standalone company, but a service provided by a larger company. The competing colors/styles clash with the parent company and makes the visitor wonder how connected they are, or how important X Agents Refer is to Porches and Places.

BRAND ANALYSIS The logo is uninspired and gives the visitor an immediate negative connotation with the large red X. The icon itself appears hastily thrown together in a clip-art fashion. The messaging is clear and direct, but suffers tremendously from poor punctuation choices. Overuse of exclamation points appears over-eager and desperate, and X Agents Refer takes this to another level, with multiple uses of 3 exclamation points together. With 15 exclamation points in 6 lines of copy, this has the feel of an online scam (regardless of the actual merit of the company).

The “website” in this instance is only one page from the larger website PorchesandPlaces.com. The page is stylistically unpleasant from an appearance standpoint, and only offers a few lines of explanatory copy, followed by a testimonial video and an intro video. The attachment to the parent website makes it feel more hidden, not more prestigious, and marrying to this specific company limits X Agents Refer strictly to California business.

Notes: No social media presence.



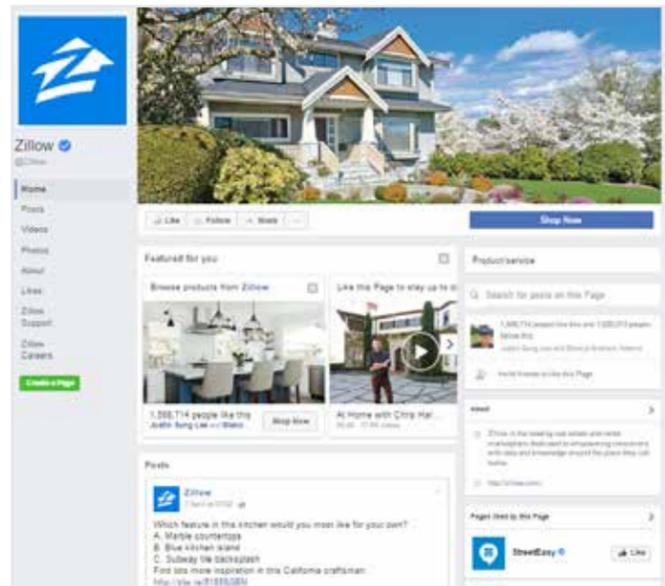
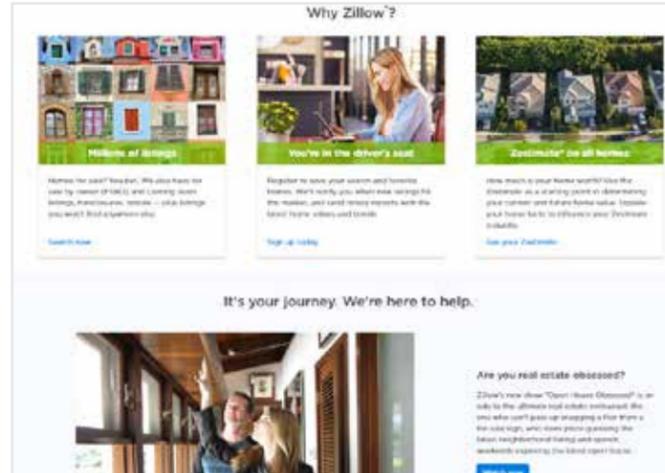
ZILLOW

COMPANY OVERVIEW Zillow is a real estate and rental marketplace boasting 110 million homes in the US, including for sale, rentals, homes not currently on the market, and estimate values. They claim to serve the full life cycle of owning and living in a home: buying, selling, renting, financing, and remodeling. Zillow offers a database of real estate agents, property managers, and home improvement professionals.

BRANDING STRENGTHS & WEAKNESSES Zillow does over half a billion dollars in revenue every year and continues to acquire smaller startups like Trulia and Dotloop. They have become the leading online resource and have leveraged key partnerships like Yahoo! Real Estate to position themselves as the preeminent thought leader in the space online. The only weakness is only catering to buyers and sellers, and therefore only captures a slice of the Shield Brokerage target market.

BRAND ANALYSIS The logo is simple and effective. The house explains the company while the script 'Z' gives it a flashy, youthful vibe, conjuring the connotation of a hot online startup disrupting the stodgy old agencies. Everything is angled forward and upward, signaling growth. The website is well done, using a simple video to create a calming effect, while quickly getting into popular search categories. The visitor can scroll, browse, and spend a lot of time on the site, whether they are a serious buyer or not.

The company's social media does a great job of using attractive imagery, well-done video, and interactive polls to foster engagement. "About" should be more featured on the website, but overall the messaging and online presence is spot on. Keys when combating Zillow should be to focus on the target demographic Shield is searching for that Zillow does not, highlighting the key differentiator.



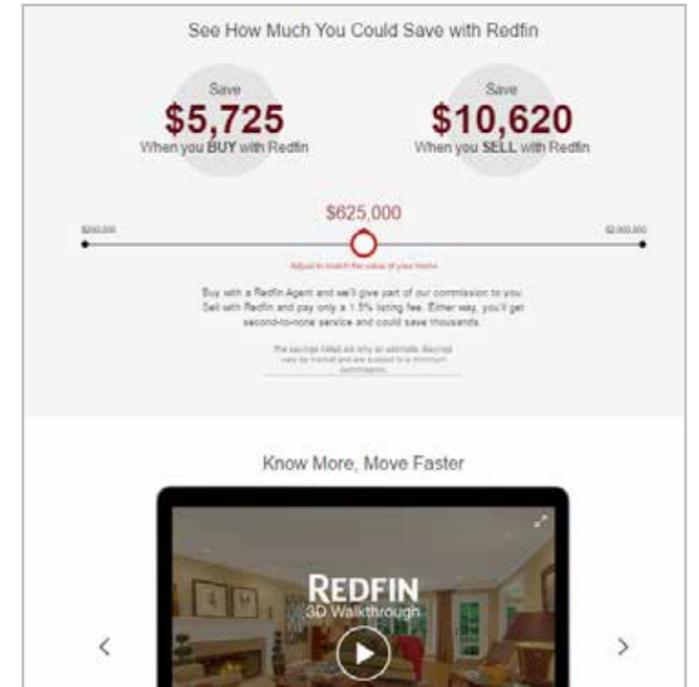
REDFIN

COMPANY OVERVIEW Redfin began as a map-based real estate search platform and evolved into a service that reduces buyer brokerage fees and streamlining the purchasing process. They maintain and present a "customer first" approach, stressing their commitment to being an advocate for the consumer and showing the world "how real estate would be if it were designed just for you."

BRANDING STRENGTHS & WEAKNESSES The company does a good job of explaining what it does and why it's valuable, but struggles with differentiating from competition. Redfin offers a listing fee that is around half of most sites, plus more information about property details, but does not actively promote this as a key differentiator. Looking at the brand from a distance, there is no clear "personality" that sticks with the visitor. It is simply a successful company with sensible offerings. There is no attitude consumers will attach themselves to and no compelling personality that would make a visitor want to use their services compared to another similar competitor.

BRAND ANALYSIS The logo is clean and simple, with the 'R' icon being the strongest element, with its stylistic touch on the letter to reflect a "fin-like" appearance. When presented with the full wordmark, and in the context of the website homepage, the full lockup is a bit bland and unmemorable. The website is clean, efficient, and easy to use - but the choice to use Helvetica font for everything (including headers) feels underwhelming. They do an excellent job with messaging, including highlighted testimonials, and a sliding scale to see how much you may expect to save. They provide a self-explanatory map to help customers find an agent near them, with available agents in 42 states.

Redfin has put in thoughtful effort in mixing in a variety of topics throughout their social media. With polls and posts unrelated to home buying/selling, as well as sourcing writers to produce listicals on various topics, they do a good job of adding variety and humanizing the brand, however this can come across as confusing without a clear "persona" or "attitude" prevalent. With no "brand opinion" tying these incongruous posts together, they feel a bit scattered.

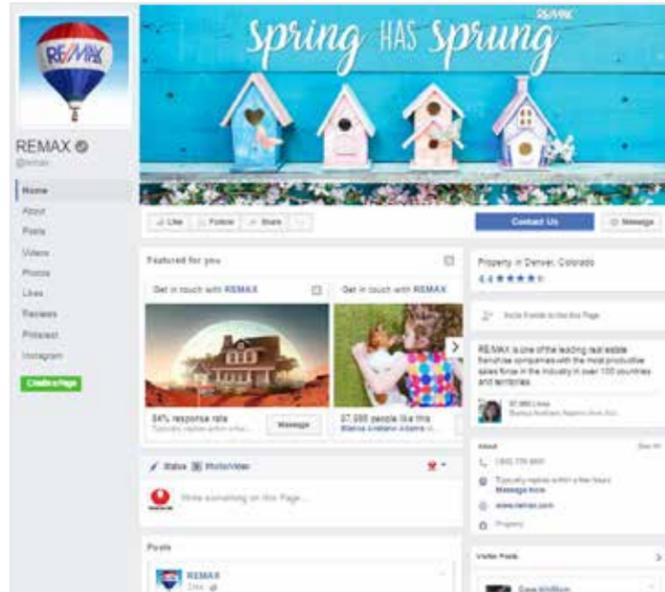


REMAX

COMPANY OVERVIEW Remax has held the number one market share in the US and Canada for 18 years - everyone knows the balloon logo. This is one of the “blue bloods” of the industry, with 44 years in business and operations in 100 countries. This is one of the prime competitors for buyer/seller business.

BRANDING STRENGTHS & WEAKNESSES Immediately recognizable logo and brand name goes a long way to instilling trust in new buyers/sellers. Being a household name comes with privileges, and Remax displays confidence by completely eliminating navigation and menu bars from their site. The brand is a big barrier to success among buyers and sellers, but only captures that market. Successful competition will involve convincing consumers the newer, smarter option is safe and profitable.

BRAND ANALYSIS Remax has decided to eliminate any clutter from their website, assume the visitor knows what the company does and what they are looking for, and organized the site into targeted and simple boxes. The result is efficient for those who have already done research, however excludes potential new clients looking for more information and convincing. The brand has used social media well to produce striking home images and hip photography, attempting to shed the “old standard” reputation of a brand of this nature. Key messaging to combat a company like this may be simply centered around the amount of personal care and protection Shield can offer, compared to a mega-company like this, which solely operates based on numbers.



CENTURY 21

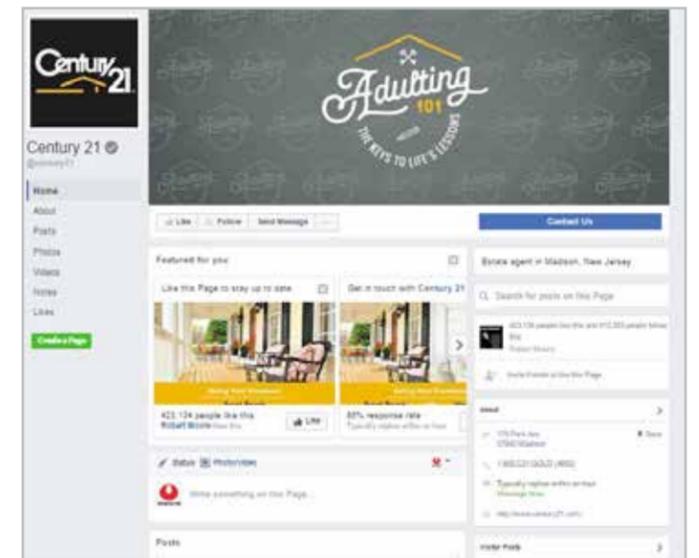
COMPANY OVERVIEW Another industry stalwart with 40+ years experience, Century 21 operates nearly 7,000 locations in 78 countries.

BRANDING STRENGTHS & WEAKNESSES Century 21 is another recognizable brand name, and operates strategically and efficiently. They've employed a distinct and recognizable black and gold color scheme, a stark difference from their main competition: Remax and Coldwell Banker.

BRAND ANALYSIS The logo on its own isn't distinct enough to move the needle after this many years, but the company is so deeply rooted in the industry, it cannot be easily updated either. This leaves an apathetic taste in the mouth of younger consumers. Yes, they recognize the brand, but does the logo, image, and attitude move them to act on it?

The website goes all-in on showcasing the company's awards: an impressive array of “highest overall satisfaction” awards from JD Power. From there, the website dives right into geo-targeted listings. It's a confident display of “here's why we are the best, now go search for yourself.”

Century 21 does a great job of marketing on social media to a younger demographic, with relevant video content, graphics, and the dedication of their cover image to “Adulthood 101,” a headline/topic specifically geared toward post-graduate 25-30 year olds. Differentiation recommendations are similar to Remax, but more effort must be taken here to cater toward a younger demographic.



Industry Analysis

CURRENT LANDSCAPE

With the rise of sites like Zillow, Trulia, and Redfin, going online for any real estate need is becoming commonplace. Industry giants like Remax and Century 21 have recognized this and have made sure the user experience on their websites is efficient and easy, as well as using social media to try to appeal to a younger demographic. That said, the industry has yet to be truly disrupted, whether that be due to a lack of ideas or difficulty scaling ideas. The real estate industry is on the brink of significant change and technological advancement but these ideas have yet to take hold on a large scale. With growing transparency in the industry from online leaders, information is more readily available than ever. Shield Brokerage stands to benefit from this transparency as an educator and advocate for buyers and sellers, acting as a disruptor from an operational and efficiency standpoint.

The pool of companies targeting part-time real estate brokers is extremely small and undeveloped, leaving room to boldly announce Shield's presence from a branding perspective. Any industry "disruptor" should have branding that is eye-catching and grabs viewer attention.

KEY INDUSTRY STATS

CHALLENGES Being the first to forge a path has many challenges.

1. If the business is not explained clearly or the messaging gets too complicated, viewers will be likely to simply dismiss the company and move on.
2. If branding comes across to edgy or brash, viewers will question the credibility and legitimacy of the service.
3. Same amount of time, dozens more options
4. Confidence needs to be instilled quickly that the company can provide a useful value that others cannot. Branding and messaging must inspire viewers to take action.

BRANDING STRENGTHS & WEAKNESSES

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88%

Buyers recently purchased their home through a real estate agent or broker.

90%

Recent buyers searched online at some point during the process

253%

Google real estate related search growth over the past 4 years

69%

Home shoppers who take action on a real estate brand website begin their research with a local term, i.e. "Houston homes for sale" on a search engine

46%

Year-over-year growth in agent and agent-related searches on YouTube

SUCCESS FACTORS

- Highlight the positives/benefits of Shield Brokerage, avoiding too much negative messaging on competitors
- Have reviews and/or testimonials to reinforce positive consumer experiences
- Obtain quotes from trusted real estate professionals about the wisdom of the company model

MAKE IT EASY

- Clearly explain the business to both target markets
- Messaging needs to be clear and concise, easing any customer fears about the company

REINFORCE KEY DIFFERENTIATOR

Why do I NEED Shield Brokerage?

- If I'm a part-time agent, Shield Brokerage will provide training and assistance to assist in transactions and chart a course for financial success.
- If I'm a buyer or seller, Shield Brokerage will illuminate the inherent conflict of interest in traditional real estate transactions and help secure a buyer or seller for my home for a fraction of the fees and commission.

Target Market & Differentiation Analysis

TARGET MARKET

Our target market, is broken up into the following categories:

- Home Buyers
- Home Sellers
- Part-Time Agents

To leverage these groups, a clear plan must be in place to convey Shield Brokerage's key differentiation that makes it the premier option available.

TRAINING, COMM'S, & EDUCATION

Shield Brokerage provides skills training to help consumers understand the process, acting as a professional mentor. Rather than complete a transaction, Shield Brokerage seeks to build a relationship.

TRUST AND CREDIBILITY

Acting as an independent consultant on the transaction, Shield Brokerage is taking out of the commission, which costs the buyer nothing. This disintermediation and elimination of friction points allows Shield Brokerage to clearly explain how they benefit all parties involved. By highlighting inherent conflicts of interest and operating with transparency, Shield Brokerage ensures the trust of all parties involved.

SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE AND GREAT BRANDING

Effective branding will become a key differentiator. By using clear, easy to understand messaging and engaging through humor when applicable, Shield Brokerage can establish a recognizable online persona. Hyper targeted social media posts will reinforce the brand and ensure the company is reaching the intended target. Eye catching imagery and consistent application of a dominant color scheme will be key factors. Shield Brokerage will benefit from avoiding common pitfalls of competitors and other industry players:

- Bland and generic stock photography
- Images of real estate agents in suits and blazers
- Cheap animation

Social media buzz is created through storytelling, compelling imagery, and consistent messaging. Shield Brokerage will position itself as an intriguing new disruptor, with imagery and messaging designed to differentiate from the crowd.

Consumer Segmentation & Personas Recommendations

CONSUMER SEGMENTATION

The following three groups are each excellent markets to target online. Within social media specifically, the opportunity exists to narrow the focus from these groups even more, to include likes/interests, careers, and hobbies. This will ensure we are getting your brand in front of people in the right demographic, with interests and careers that match those likely to engage.

PERSONAS REC'S

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HARD CHARGERS

Hard Chargers is dominated by well-educated and professionally successful singles. They are almost all homeowners in a mix of houses and condominiums.

INCOME RANK: 8
INCOME LEVEL: Affluent
NET WORTH RANK: 11
NET WORTH VALUE: \$50K-\$499K
LIFESTYLE GROUP: Cash & Careers
AGE GROUP: 30-45
MARITAL STATUS: Single
HOME OWNERSHIP: Owner
KIDS: No Kids
LOCATION: Suburbs & Towns

REASONING This group is established and is highly likely to include part-time agents who got their license looking for a second stream of income or a part-time hobby. Hard Chargers are opportunity-driven and are more likely to be actively seeking opportunities online.

DYNAMIC DUOS

These dual-income, no-kids couples are well educated and well compensated. They are homeowners in mostly upscale neighborhoods.

INCOME RANK: 20
INCOME LEVEL: Upper Middle
NET WORTH RANK: 19
NET WORTH VALUE: \$25K-\$499K
LIFESTYLE GROUP: Cash & Careers
AGE GROUP: 36-45
MARITAL STATUS: Married
HOME OWNERSHIP: Owner
KIDS: No Kids
LOCATION: Suburbs & Towns

REASONING These upscale couples are childless and therefore have the means to want to sell (and therefore buy) without the barriers and complications to this process that typically comes with children. With an upper middle class income level, these Dynamic Duos are great targets for supplemental income opportunities.

FULL STEAMING

Full Steaming is a mix of affluent, well-educated couples and singles that have a net worth exceeding \$500,000. The group ranks second for working women, with a significant number being employed.

INCOME RANK: 13
INCOME LEVEL: Affluent
NET WORTH RANK: 6
NET WORTH VALUE: \$500K-\$999K
LIFESTYLE GROUP: Golden Years
AGE GROUP: 56-65
MARITAL STATUS: Married / Single
HOME OWNERSHIP: Owner
KIDS: No Kids
LOCATION: Suburbs & Towns

REASONING This group is slightly older in age, but also wealthier. They are in their "golden years," but still active and childless. They are likely to be looking for income opportunities to either supplement their retirement portfolio, or simply as a hobby as their own careers wind down.

Summary

With these three groups, we increase the likelihood of targeting individuals interested in buying or selling homes, or those with existing part-time licenses. We can then further target within these groups based on personal interests and other sites visited. By establishing trust through education, training, and effective social media, Shield Brokerage can emerge as an industry disruptor and a trusted source for buyers, sellers, and part-time agents.

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