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THE FUTURE OF THE LAND PRO:

**How Agents and Companies Can Maintain
Success in a Changing Industry**

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The Future of the Land Pro

How Agents and Companies Can Maintain Success in a Changing Industry

For better or for worse, the past, present, and future are interconnected, ever-changing, and constant. At Part & Parcel, we believe that because change is inevitable it's our responsibility to embrace it so that we may shape our future into the best version it can be.

This white paper aims to explore why the land profession in its current state is due for a major transformation, what that evolution could look like, how companies can (and should) future-proof their businesses, and how land professionals can set themselves up for success.

The Current State of the Land Industry

There would be no land profession(als) without the oil and gas industry. That said, oil and gas have played a major role in American history since the creation of several of today's most profitable petroleum companies in the mid-1800s.

As the oil industry boomed, the "landman" became a crucial player in the trading of mineral rights. From the founding of the Panhandle Association of Petroleum Landmen in 1950 (the first such association of its kind) to the American Association of Professional Landmen just five years later, the next 60 years would see many developments in how these resources were mined across the country.

Suffice it to say, where there's oil and gas to drill, there are land pros there to act as intermediaries between resource owners and companies/developers.

Which poses the question: how can the industry continue to be successful while providing the best support for the landman professionals whose labor it was (and continues to be) built on?

To answer that, we must first understand where we're at so that we can get a clearer picture of where we need to be.

The land industry is a **human-centered business**

If we take a bird's eye view of the technological advancements we've seen over time (many of which we now take for granted), it's hard not to notice how much the business has changed. Before advancements in tech, the vast majority of communication had to take place in person and long-distance communication was stretched out over weeks or months.

While today's modern interactions are virtually instantaneous, this tech-driven era doesn't come without its pitfalls: the more digitally connected humans become, the stronger their desire to "unplug" grows.

Why does this matter? Because it points to the very important truth that, on a cellular level, people would rather make authentic, in-person connections. While focused on land, this profession has and always will be, a human-centered business.



Environmental discoveries lead to significant changes

One could argue that the land profession was born the moment we began leveraging natural resources for our growing population. Discovering more effective (and economic) ways to divvy up land -- and generate enough energy to sustain said land -- has led to massive shifts in how land professionals do their jobs. Wherever resources like oil and gas could be found, the land pro was there, building a relationship between those who owned the mineral rights and those who wished to extract them.

The turn-of-the-century discovery of the Barnett Shale proved to be a game-changer for the land profession because, unlike traditional methods of extracting resources, horizontal drilling (found to be the most practical way to mine the area) can span multiple properties (up to 100+). This meant that the work of land pros didn't just end at just one lease -- instead, they would have to secure land access with every owner that could potentially be affected.

Thankfully, tools for digital communication and other online resources made this possible to do in a more efficient and productive way over time.

As land professionals evolved, so did companies

Of course environmental (and technological) changes led to many evolutions not just of the land pro but of land companies as well. After oil and gas, we saw a rise in utility companies, renewable energy developers, Telecom/Fiber Optic/Cell Towers, and more.

As the land profession grew, so did the land pro's desired skill set. Companies were now on the hunt for land pros well-versed in everything from complex title research to easement and landowner negotiations and outreach. Others took a more specialized approach, looking for expert pros who could dive deeply into one particular function and/or sector. Today, many land professionals fall into one of two camps: title research or landowner outreach.

Global Influences on the Future of Land

So, what does the current state of the land profession tell us about what the future might look like? We already know that many global factors have had a major impact on the industry. Keeping an eye on these influences on a more granular level not only helps us form an opinion but also allows us to make strategic changes in areas where we'd like to see improvement.

Economic influences

The oil and gas industry has rebounded strongly throughout 2021, with oil prices reaching their highest levels in six years. As we move into 2022, many oil and gas companies are reportedly looking to turn their focus towards practicing capital discipline, focusing on financial health, committing to climate change, and transforming business models. With two-thirds of oil and gas executives surveyed by Deloitte sharing their optimism for strategic changes planned for the new year, experts say, when it comes down to it, “purpose-driven, tech-enabled, and human-powered organizations with smart interim goals and progressive communication and disclosure strategies can make [these changes] happen.”

Additionally, Deloitte reports that the oil and gas industry shed 107,000 jobs between March and August of last year, as a result of the pandemic, calling it the “fastest rate of layoffs in the industry’s history.” While it’s certainly possible that the total labor numbers will never return to pre-pandemic levels, Leslie Beyer, chief executive officer of the Energy Workforce and Technology Council [says](#), “[The] innovation in the industry is driving opportunities for new, highly technical, and digitally driven jobs in decreasing emissions of energy production.”

As a result, land agents have the opportunity to broaden their horizons, arming themselves with the knowledge and skills to work in many sectors (rather than pigeon-holing themselves into just one). By the same token, companies now have a greater incentive to leverage technology and automation to make operations more efficient.

Political influences

In late November, President Joe Biden announced the U.S. government would release 50 million barrels of oil from the nation's strategic oil reserves to try and tame rising gas prices.

Biden also proposed a \$1.9 trillion spending plan, known as the Build Back Better bill, with the brunt of funding being put towards transforming the nation's social safety net and combating climate change. The budget bill – for which AAPL delivered a letter to key U.S. senators opposing many of its provisions – has stalled in the U.S. Senate and will not be passed this year.

As a [testament](#) to the strength of the association (which is made up of more than 11,000 land professionals), AAPL's department of governmental affairs was eventually contacted by legislative staff for Senator Steve Daines (R-MT) who stated that he'd "read [their] letter, agreed with [their] positions and [would] reach out to [the] Montana local association to put the senator in touch with his constituents.

This points to the possible reality that land professionals of all kinds can (and will) become much more involved in political developments in their hopes to see certain changes. On a practical level, this looks like building stronger relationships with local elected officials, more involvement in memberships that have lobbyists, etc.



Cultural shifts

One of the most obvious evolutions of the landman is the name itself. While in oil and gas, land professionals are typically called landmen, in the telecom industry, they're called site acquisition agents. When it comes to linear projects, they're often called the right-of-way agent. In renewables, they are called land agents or leasing agents.

There are also specific roles under the land professional umbrella such as division order analyst, title analyst, lease analyst, etc. And, when there are multiple land professionals working together, there are often titles that denote hierarchy like landman one, landman two, junior, or senior.

Beyond the name, how else has the land pro evolved? Using a database of 30 million profiles and after extensive research and analysis, Zippia's data science team found that:

**These numbers represent employed W-9 employees and do not include 1099 contractors.*

- ✓ There are over 10,847 land pros currently employed in the United States.
- ✓ Land pros are paid an average annual salary of \$94,394.
- ✓ 27.1 percent of all land pros are women, while 69.0 percent are men.
- ✓ The land pro's average starting salary is \$67,000.
- ✓ The average age of an employed land pro is 47 years old.
- ✓ In 2021, women earned 96% of what men earned.
- ✓ The most common ethnicity of a land pro is White (71.0 percent), followed by Hispanic or Latino (11.5 percent), and Black or African American (8.8 percent).
- ✓ The top 10% of highest-paid land pros earn as much as \$132,000 or more per year.
- ✓ The majority of land pros are located in Houston, TX, and Oklahoma City, OK.
- ✓ 4% of all land pros identify as LGBTQIA.

Upon first glance, there's still a way to go when it comes to land professionals reflecting the communities they do business in. Considering how teams with a more diverse set of ideas and perspectives tend to perform better, restructuring the recruitment process to be more inclusive of candidates from marginalized and/or underrepresented groups would put land companies at a major advantage in the long run.

What the Future Looks Like (Maybe)

Global Influence	Possible Changes	Lesson to be Learned
<p style="text-align: center;">Technology</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We'll see an influx of inventive, intuitive, and immersive tools (like artificial intelligence and augmented reality) integrated into the land pro's daily tasks. • Tools of the trade will become more centralized for things like research, communications, and recruitment; all land professionals and companies will be able to sync up on singular platforms 	<p>Don't be afraid of adopting new technology and streamlining your processes. Any initial growing pains will be worth an end result of easier, more effective negotiations for all parties involved.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Environmental</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depending on what new discoveries and/or innovations (if any) in this area, renewable energy sources could go back to being the norm. • Alternatively, technological advances could make it possible to generate energy and leverage resources in a much more sustainable way, causing less harm in the long term. 	<p>Being an early adopter and/or proponent of new tech and other discoveries in this area will put you at the forefront of innovation and the next iteration of this industry.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Cultural</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The recruitment process will be overhauled. This will look like more transparency, synchronous platforms, and streamlined processes driven by tech. This will also result in a more even playing field where previous issues like referral bias don't exist and "bad eggs" have nowhere to hide. • A Personal and professional development will be highly encouraged (and supported), with a holistic and thoughtful approach to the humans behind the work (on both sides). 	<p>Experts will band together to solve the problems faced by the people that make up the land profession. Use of platforms like Part & Parcel that work to streamline the process, deliver customized training and coaching, and match land agents and companies in a way that ensures more long-term relationships will be seen as a marked advantage.</p>

Conclusion

It's time to work for more than just a boom or bust economy in a cyclical industry. This comes with too many challenges with adverse effects on too many people's livelihoods. All of us involved in the land profession are standing at the precipice of a global transformation. We, therefore, have a unique opportunity to shape the next iteration of the trade.

Early leaders in adopting change stand to gain a major leg up on the competition and are in a prime position to build a new normal -- one that benefits everyone.

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