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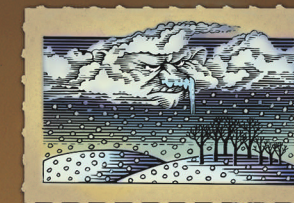
## Home is Where the Heart is

NRS Award winners share  
customer satisfaction  
best practices

From left to  
right: Pam  
Burke, Kris  
LeBlanc, Lois  
MacIssac and  
Alan Green  
of The Green  
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Below right: Magnolia Park by  
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More than simply a financial investment, our homes are the stage upon which we live our lives. Which is why professionals charged with building communities – developers, builders, architects and city officials – are looking at ways to create not only houses but whole neighborhoods that put people first.

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# Professional Builder®

## Editorial Director

Paul Deffenbaugh 630/288-8190  
paul.deffenbaugh@reedbusiness.com

## Group Managing Editor

Erin Hallstrom-Erickson 630/288-8198  
erin.hallstrom@reedbusiness.com

## Production Editor

Rhonda Jackson 630/288-8167  
rhonda.jackson@reedbusiness.com

## Copy Editor

Sara Zailskas 630/288-8197  
sara.zailskas@reedbusiness.com

## Senior Editors

Laura Butalla 630/288-8192  
lbutalla@reedbusiness.com

Mark Jarasek 630/288-8171  
mark.jarasek@reedbusiness.com

Bill Lurz 941/371-4804  
bill.lurz@reedbusiness.com

Felicia Oliver 630/288-8483  
felicia.oliver@reedbusiness.com

## Products Editor

Nicholas Bajzek 630/288-8187  
nicholas.bajzek@reedbusiness.com

## Senior Contributing Editor

Matt Power 207/780-0227  
mpower@maine.rr.com

## Contributors

Scott Sedam, John Rymer, Paul Cardis

## Vice President, Publishing Director

Julian Francis 630/288-8826  
julian.franis@reedbusiness.com

## Publisher

Director, Building Group  
Niles Crum 630/288-8160  
ncrum@reedbusiness.com

## Director of Finance

Bruce Ksiazek 630/288-8120  
bksiazek@reedbusiness.com

## Director of Electronic Media

Karthi Gandhi 630/288-8172  
karthi.gandhi@reedbusiness.com

## Circulation Manager

Angela Tanner 303/470-4488  
atanner@reedbusiness.com

## Creative Director

Bill Patton 630/288-8050  
bpatton@reedbusiness.com

## Editorial & Publishing Office

Professional Builder  
2000 Clearwater Drive  
Oak Brook, IL 60523  
Telephone: 630/288-8000  
Fax: 630/288-8145

## Reed Business Information

Tad Smith Chief Executive Officer  
Jeff Greisch President, Chicago Division

STAFF VOL 71 NO 12

# Web Update

## There are basic assumptions

about our readers we make here at *Professional Builder*.

1. You're busy and don't have time to wade through a lot of crap.
2. You want information that has been tested in the real world of home building and isn't just theory.
3. When something does grab your interest, you want to get more information about it quickly.

Delivering that kind of information in print and online can be a challenge, but we have recently made changes to our Web site that make it easier for you to hit all three of those goals. You may already have become familiar with HousingZone.com; it still exists as an umbrella site. But now each of our magazines has its own Web site. When you're looking for marketing ideas, you don't necessarily want to see what remodelers are doing and they don't necessarily care what you're doing.

Professional Builder's web address is **www.probuilder.com**. ProBuilder.com is now easier to navigate; offers more and better information; and ties in more closely with our print efforts. We call it our channel strategy and it works like this.

When we run a story in an issue, it falls within one of four departments: Best Practices; Plans and Projects, Emerging Issues; or Innovations. That same story will appear online under the same department name but will include information we didn't have room to print.

In addition, we have online content we will package around those stories, making it easier for you to learn more. So, when you read a story on land acquisition methods in our best practices department in the magazine, you can go online to find more new material and other content we've created over the years.

Of course, that's not all we've done



with the Web site.

- The design is easier and cleaner to navigate, making it simpler to find the information you need.
- Each channel has specialized sub-sections to find information on specific topics.
- Content is updated daily.
- We'll offer quick online polls to gauge the industry temperature.
- Forums will focus on topics that are important to the industry today.

Most important to this are the resources we're devoting to the Web sites. Our entire editorial staff is responsible for both print and electronic media, and leading that effort is Senior Editor Mark Jarasek. What is different from most magazines about this approach is that we have completely intertwined our print and electronic editorial staffs. This gives us greater flexibility, better coverage and more depth. We think you'll notice the difference in the new ProBuilder.com Web site. **PB**

*Paul Deffenbaugh*

**Paul Deffenbaugh**

Editorial Director

630/288.8190

paul.deffenbaugh@reedbusiness.com

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# This Land is Your Land...

## Immigration Debate Continues

Scott Sedam gives some good arguments in his assessment of the immigration problem vis-à-vis our industry. However, the fact remains that they are here illegally, and when we, as business owners, hire them, we are also breaking the law.

Isn't one of the long-term goals of our industry to raise the level of professionalism of our industry? When you cross the line into condoning illegal behavior, where do you stop? How does this affect the morale of your legal employees?

Obviously, we need immigrants to help with the labor force, but we also have a large amount of people who should be in the workforce and are not. In the rural area in which I live and work there are plenty of able-bodied people whom apparently choose not to work because of the ease of getting social benefits. Surely, as a nation as great as ours there are many ways to combat the lack of a skilled workforce.

CHAUNCEY C. WIRSING  
Somerset, Pa.

## Land Development

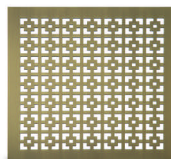
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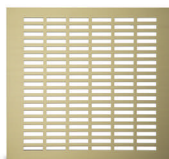
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for cancer care facilities. My interest in Paul Deffenbaugh's September editorial is from my upbringing in the Northern California Sacramento Valley, where agricultural land is rapidly becoming streets and yards. As Mr. Deffenbaugh points out, this is another of the divisive issues. Allow me to add a twist to the issue of community.

The growth experienced in the Sacramento area has been to provide more affordable housing only slightly farther away. First, Sacramento grew out of the Bay Area; now the rural communities grow out of Sacramento. Development uses the existing roads and services until expansion is required (after the development is done). Farmland is converted to housing as the land passes from the farm generation to the non-farm generation and land valuation drives up taxes. It is too easy to pick on developers. The real culprit is the population growth that enables land value escalation around economic hot spots.

As an essential part of the community, I think a builder must identify what makes the community thrive and not screw that up!

No matter how fast a town grows, the core of the population remembers how it used to be. Have respect for the traditions of the town and you have their respect in return. Small towns experience the same "suburban shift" that has troubled larger cities.

I think the company growth issue is overplayed. It is not bad to not grow — it's just harder. It's harder, but not impossible, to avoid the malaise you mention. Maybe we just have two different measures of necessary growth. Growth assures cash-flow but may not be building a stable base. My experience is that companies that grow without any attempt to control it collapse as soon as the growth slows even the slightest bit. That's not really growth in a structural sense, just expanding and using the cash flow.

An emphasis on ethics is the key to all of the above. Do what is right for the company, but also what is right for the community. Don't "drive it like you stole it." Build it like you own it.

JOHN CROWHURST  
Louisville, Ky.

## Contact Us

Please include your name, company name, address and phone number.

Write to or e-mail Paul Deffenbaugh

Professional Builder

2000 Clearwater Drive

Oak Brook, IL 60523

fax: 630/288.8145

e-mail: [paul.deffenbaugh@reedbusiness.com](mailto:paul.deffenbaugh@reedbusiness.com)

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# Proactive Solutions

>> BY LAURA BUTALLA, SENIOR EDITOR

## Trendy Incentive Plans

As the market slows, builders get creative with incentives for Realtors and buyers.

**The slowing housing market** has created new incentives for home builders to boost sales, and builders are finding incentives that appeal to potential home buyers and Realtors alike.

Builders are promising some Realtors in Florida anywhere from \$2,000 to \$10,000 cash for each home they sell. Longleaf, a Florida master planned community near Tampa, offers Realtors gas cards to encourage home showings in their community. Other builders are offering shopping spree points to agents for drawing clients into model homes.

Realtors aren't the only ones benefiting from incentives though; potential home buyers are, too. Several Midwest builders offer to pay six months of mort-

gages to buyers. Other builders tack on upgrades such as basements. Some have gone as far as offering plasma televisions with the home sale.

Other builders' incentives include coupons and specials on their Web sites, including \$125 toward a new home, \$250 toward design centers and \$5,000 toward closing costs. KB Home has already offered a free home, too.

Despite these incentives, NAHB and other housing industry analysts still predict home sales and housing production will slow for a few more quarters.



>> BY RHONDA JACKSON, STAFF WRITER

## Tips for Successful Sales Promotions

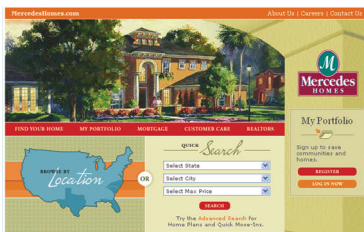
HOME BUILDERS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY are employing various selling and discounting strategies to move their inventories.

Florida-based Mercedes Homes, which builds mid-range/move-up homes in Florida, Texas, North Carolina and South Carolina, introduced several promotional sale activities including its "You've Got the Power" inventory sale in July. This "Let's Make a Deal" type promotion encouraged buyers to go to sales centers and make their best offer while taking advantage of Mercedes Homes' financing programs, closing cost assistance, below-market interest rates and free upgrades.

The outcome of the promotion was less than what company heads had expected; however, Mercedes Homes did learn a few lessons in the process:

### Lesson No. 1

"Give consumers a particular price," says Scott Buescher, chief operating officer of Mercedes Homes. When you allow them to set the



price they are not sure that they are getting the best deal. People need a more definite number, he says.

### Lesson No. 2

Allow enough time between sales promotions. Conducting sales back-to-back can potentially water down the responses you receive from home buyers. The impact of the "You've Got

the Power" promotion was weakened, Buescher says, because it followed too closely on the heels of Mercedes' 96-hour sale, which was held in June.

### Lesson No. 3

Frame your promotions within short periods of time. Mercedes Homes held three promotional events: a 96-hour sale; a two-week, Sneak Peak promotion; and a nine-day Savings Spectacular. With such rapid-fire promotions, potential buyers were given a small window of opportunity to buy — and a smaller opportunity to delay purchasing.

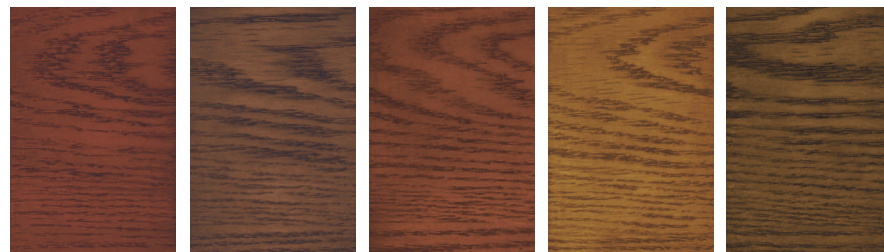


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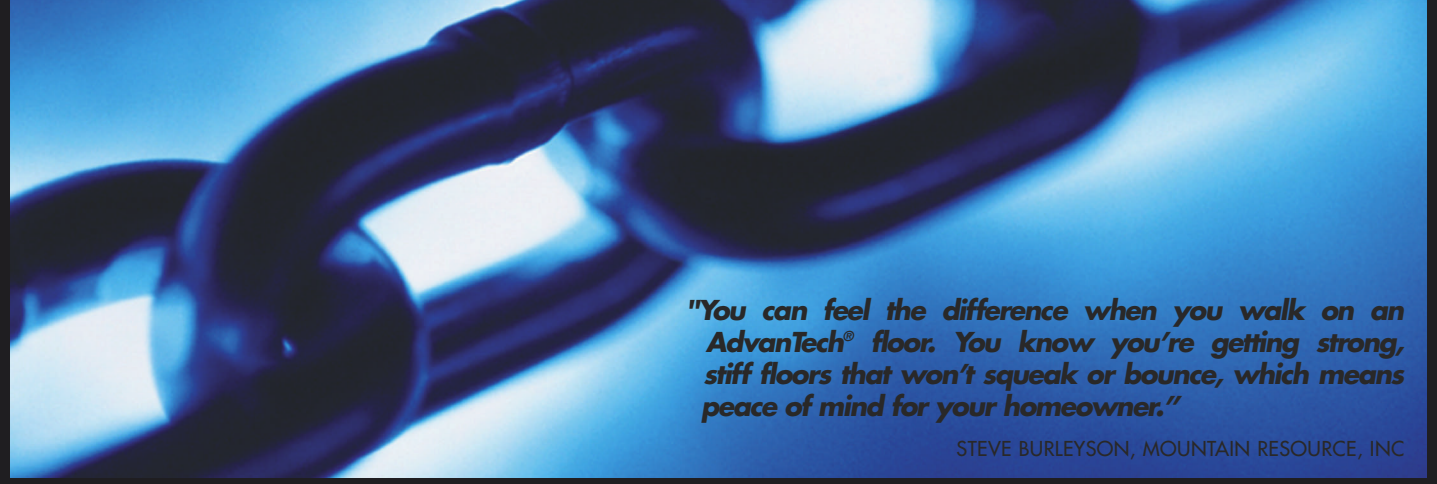
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## LESSONS LEARNED



# Mail Call!

You don't have to be a loser in the race to control costs.

**Imagine you own a fairly large** framing business. You run 20 crews and work hard to price fairly, maintain quality standards and stay on schedule. Most years, you work for six or eight builders, several with whom you have long-term relationships. This year is a tough year. You open a letter from one of your major accounts stating that your contracted price for all future work has been reduced by 5 percent. It's worded nicely, but the bottom line is, take it or leave it.

You recall all of the extras you routinely do for this builder that you never charge for and how habitual late change orders screw things up. You reluctantly accept the new terms, vow no more freebies and scrap your annual contribution to their big golf outing. And that's just Monday.

## And on Tuesday ...

On Tuesday, another builder letter arrives, informing you that your dowry to continue the relationship is an immediate 8 percent price reduction. You are steamed. Last month you saved the construction vice president's fanny by tearing the second story off three framed

models and never charging the builder. How many times have you absorbed a lumber price increase with the promise that it would be made up but the makeup never came? Get a small price drop, though, and the firm's purchasing manager calls you before breakfast, demanding a reduction.

The builder contracts with marginal foundation crews that cause your guys to incur extra cost — same with their mechanical crews, who cause return trips after the city inspector takes exception to how they chop up joists while installing plumbing, electrical and HVAC. What a load of crap! Just last week you passed on to the builder the latest lumber price reduction, and even if you trim labor costs and cut your margin to the bone, another 8 percent makes this business relationship a loser.

## Wednesday: Not Much Better

On Wednesday, a certified letter arrives from your big national builder. As you have come to expect, their language isn't even nice. It proclaims that, retroactive to Sept. 1, the builder's deducting 10 percent from all contracts. A contract addendum is to be signed and returned within five days.

You toss the letter across the room. The extra cost you endure with this builder — just to get his volume — makes you nuts. On top of that, the wet-behind-the-ears college kid superintendents are a constant problem, and you stopped counting the times your guys have kept them from doing something stupid. Every week



**Demands for across-the-board cuts guarantee you two things: short-term gains that make it look like you've won and not-so-long-term consequences that ensure you lose it all — and more.**



sees another wasted trip to a building site and each one costs you a couple of hundred bucks. Their plans are never right and their constant churning of their trades means things never run smoothly. The lawyers are so afraid of lawsuits that their product is way over-engineered — and you eat most of those costs.

Adding insult to injury, this builder is “chargeback happy,” and there is never a prior call to discuss the source — it just shows up two months after a house is finished as a check deduction. By then it’s too late to negotiate, and it completely screws up your accounting. To get the business last year, you gave their purchasing guys your single lowest price, yet they never let up.

But what really sticks in your craw is that this outfit always talks “partnering.” They started a supplier/trade “partnering council” a while back, and it’s a joke. At the supplier/trade breakfast, the CEO from headquarters gave a long speech about how much they value their exceptional supplier/trade relationships. Suppliers and trades alike rolled their eyes, and many called the CEO a hypocrite. You just think the CEO has no clue what is going on in the local division.

You want to just walk on this builder, but that means laying off a lot of your guys. So you resolve to find enough business to allow you to ignore their future bid requests. In the meantime, you will sign the 10 percent agreement and make it up everywhere you can. You will always send them your weakest crews. You will skimp on lumber, dropping the extra jack studs and using material traditionally set aside for bracing and blocking for framing. No more special favors, no more coddling superintendents, no more smoothing things over with inspectors and no more absorbing problems caused by other trades. You will charge for everything, including a \$150 fee — “wasted trip to the building site” — and refuse to accept any chargeback without

a prior discussion. You know that within a year, you’ll be gone, but you’ll get your 10 percent back *and more*.

### Thursday: It Gets Worse

On Thursday, you get one more letter and you hate to even open it. This is starting to feel like extortion. It’s from the big local builder you have known the longest, and he’s the closest thing to a partner you have. The company still does a lot of things wrong, wasting time and money, but it is always fair, whether it is bid packages, charge backs or change orders. It usually has the best trades to work with, too. You open the letter.



Dear Bill,

*You have no doubt received letters from other builders demanding a 5 percent to 10 percent reduction in contract price. This is a tough year for all of us, and the truth is, we need the same kind of cost reduction — at least 8 percent.*

*But we want to go about it differently. We know that you and your team know more about your work than anyone, and that’s true for all our suppliers and trades. We believe that if you come up with the ideas and we listen, work together to implement them, you can show us how to find that money — without killing your margins. We’re calling it an assault on cost without assaulting our suppliers and trades.*

*So here’s the deal. Focus on the plans for the Premier Living series. Go through them from top to bottom with your guys. Where are we wasting material? How could we make them easier to build? What are other trades doing that add to the cost? Bill, nothing is sacred here. Take a hard look at process as well as the product. If there are things we could change in the way we schedule, supply plans and specs, the way we handle options — whatever it is — lay it on the table. In short, you tell us how to save the money and we will do everything possible to respond. We suggest a goal for every supplier and trade of finding at least \$250 per house*

*— on your terms — not ours. In two weeks, we will sit down in turn with each of you who want to participate and see what we can figure out.*

*If you like the approach, give us a call right away and we’ll send you a fresh set of plans to mark up and a checklist from something called “Lean Production” that will help you touch all the bases while looking to reduce cost. If this sounds like too much trouble, we can just do it the old-fashioned way and simply cut 8 percent from your contract, but we hope we get no takers on that approach.*

*We look forward to hearing from you.*

*Regards,  
Smith Homes*

You sit at your desk, stunned. “\$250 a house?” you think. “Hell, I can find them more than that — *IF* they are really willing to listen.” You call out to Marjie: “Hey! Bring me those plans for the Smith Premier series and call Carlos, Joey and Luke and tell them I need them here at 5 sharp for a meeting! And order us a pizza before you leave; we’ll be working late.”

In the race to cut costs during the worsening housing downturn, there will be winners and losers. Demands for across-the-board cuts guarantee you two things: short-term gains that make it look like you’ve won and not-so-long-term consequences that ensure you lose it all — *and more*. Those who survive the downturn will be poised to reap tremendous rewards when things turn around. Those who do it with their supplier and trade relationships in tact will be the true winners. **PB**

Scott Sedam is president of TrueNorth Development, a nationwide consulting and training firm focused on quality, process improvement and organizational development. He can be reached at [scott@truen.com](mailto:scott@truen.com).



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## NEW HOME KNOWLEDGE

# Navigating Contingencies

Tips for dealing with customers with homes to sell



**It has been more than seven years** since we last had a buyers market for resale homes, so it is not surprising that many new-home sales professionals have become anxious when dealing with customers who have their own home to sell before a deal.

Imagine a conversation between a new-home sales professional who has just completed a tour of the builder's community with a customer who has yet to sell their current home.

When a sales professional hears the homeowner has a home he or she still needs to sell, what should the new-home sales professional say?

**A.** "Come back when you have your home under contract."

**B.** "We can write a contingency sale."

**C.** "We love to work with customers who know the value of home ownership."

The right answer is "C," but without a road map for "home-to-sell" customers, many sales professionals are stuck somewhere in the first two answers.

Sales professionals should consider adopting this six-step process for customers with homes to sell:

**Step 1.** *"Let's work together to understand the resale market."* It is imperative that customers consider their new-home sales professional as an expert on all aspects of residential real-estate.

**Step 2.** *"Let's determine the average number of days on the market a home in your price range and neighborhood takes to sell."* Smart sales professionals focus on the average days to sell.

**Step 3.** *"Let's find the right Realtor to sell your home."* Tell your customer that a good Realtor will not bother to list your home unless it can be sold in a reasonable amount of time.

**Step 4.** *"Take your home's appraisal information and use it to your advantage."* If your customer's goal is to sell his or her home rather than just list it, this is the measurement he or she should focus on.

**Step 5.** *"Take your home-selling to-do list seriously."* Realtors know what trimming trees or removing bulky furniture can do to accelerate the sale of a customer's home

**Step 6.** *"You must be willing to provide your Realtor with a lock box and reasonable access to your home."* Customers must understand that most Realtors will not bother looking at a home that requires a 24-plus hour advance appointment.

Once customers are convinced this is the best road map to selling their existing home, they will beat the average time it takes to sell their home. **PB**

*John Rymer is the founder of New Home Knowledge, which offers sales training for new home builders and real-estate professionals. He can be reached at [john@newhomeknowledge.com](mailto:john@newhomeknowledge.com).*



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# “Our most successful neighborhoods are built *with brick*.”

— John Feezor,  
*President, Charlotte Division, John Wieland Homes & Neighborhoods*



“John Wieland Homes has been building houses in the Southeast since 1970. We built our first home in Atlanta and we just recently passed the 30,000 benchmark. And this past year, NAHB named us America’s Best Builder. With our experience, we have a very clear picture of what buyers want as a primary construction material, and that’s brick.

Why? I think there are several reasons. Buyers like to put their stamp on a home with the options you get from brick without added cost – color choice, size, and shape that really set one home apart from another. They associate brick with a higher degree of personal security as well as HVAC savings. We hear that all the time. And they understand that brick adds resale value if

they decide to move. But to me, one thing sums it up best. Our buyers walk in the door already thinking that brick equals quality. And if you want to be profitable in the homebuilding business, you don’t argue with that.”

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# Proactive Solutions

>> BY BILL LURZ, SENIOR EDITOR

## KB Home Opens First New Orleans Model

Just two weeks after Hurricane Katrina's first anniversary, KB Home takes a step toward fulfilling Bruce Karatz's promise to rebuild the city.

**The model home opened Sept. 16** at KB's River Garden community is not what you'd expect from a national production builder: an exquisite re-creation of a New Orleans Greek Revival home, a style built in the late 19th century in the historic districts that surround downtown. And like the homes of that day, it doesn't have an attached garage.

KB seized a fortuitous opportunity to buy 73 lots on six acres in a 48.9 acre redevelopment of HUD's former St. Thomas housing project along the Mississippi and surrounded on three sides by historic districts with stringent architectural review requirements. The sale made it the first model home in New Orleans; no production builder has ever had a division there. Federal ownership of the land brought the site under the jurisdiction of the U.S. National Parks Service, which mandated that the single-family phase of the project be compatible with the historic neighborhoods.

"We had to work with Louisiana's State Historic Officers (SHPO) to reach that goal," says David W. Buck, KB's executive vice president for the New Orleans division. "They dictated the architectural style, exterior colors, everything. The houses were pre-platted on the lots. None of that was left open to selection by our buyers."

There are 11 different house plans in the neighborhood, and 15 of the lots are designated as "affordable." Although the company can boast off-street parking, it can't brag about garages because no garages are allowed in the historic district.

"Bruce Karatz (KB Home chairman)

came to New Orleans right after Katrina, looking for an opportunity to help," Buck recalls. "Steve Davis (KB Home southeast region president) came in from Atlanta and found this project. It was already platted and permitted. The homes were designed and well on the way to clearing architectural review by SHPO. The developers (HRI Properties) planned to build the homes, but after the storm, it worked out well for them to sell the lots to us.

"It was a great opportunity for us to hit the ground running," Buck says. "We opened a division to build in both New Orleans and Baton Rouge on Dec. 1 last year and began sales at River Garden in July. We now have four communities we're building in, including a townhouse development in New Orleans and two single-family projects in Baton Rouge. There are four more developments where we are considering purchasing lots, and three we are developing ourselves that are now in due diligence. "We're here for the long run."

KB has 34 employees in its Louisiana division and fields a steady stream of inquiries from employees in other divisions who want to return to the Gulf Coast. "We already have two supers and



**KB HOME BUILDS RIVER GARDEN** houses in New Orleans at a hard cost of \$79 a square foot on serviced lots averaging \$110,000. Hard costs are higher because of custom-designed, 8-foot, aluminum-clad wood windows manufactured by Weathershield and required for historic architectural specifications.

a sales counselor who transferred here," Buck reports.

KB thought enough of the River Garden house plans to buy all rights to them. "We may want to go into storm-damaged historic areas of New Orleans and redevelop whole blocks at a time," Buck says. "The River Garden house plans have already been through SHPO approval, so we now have a product line ready for that opportunity if it comes along."

The River Garden houses range from 1,257 to 2,305 square feet and are base priced from \$305,900 to \$424,900. The model is a 1,833 square-foot, two-story Greek Revival with three bedrooms priced at \$364,000. All three of those "Plan F" houses in the first phase of lots released have sold among 11 sold by mid-October.



NRS reports its annual  
Customer Satisfaction  
Awards

# Simply the best



>> BY **PAUL CARDIS**, NRS. CORP.  
WITH ADDITIONAL REPORTING  
BY THE NRS TEAM

**Satisfied customers are the  
lifeblood of every home builder.**

Without happy home buyers, referrals dry up along with future profits. So it goes to reason that any home builder who consistently wows customers and exceeds their expectations deserves attention. The 2006 NRS Awards presented by *Professional Builder* recognizes such builders based on the results of surveys completed by home buyers across North America.

The following pages take you inside the eight winning companies and provide insight into their best practices. We hope their stories inspire you to reach the next level in customer delight. As the winners referral ratings prove, creating avid customers is the surest path to success and longevity in the marketplace.







## The Power of Caring About Improving Lifestyle

In last year's NRS Award study, we discovered genuine caring was at the core of builders' performance. Since that time, our team has shared these results with hundreds of companies and helped them focus on this key component of satisfaction.

But one key question keeps coming up: what are we caring about and how is the best way to go about it? This year's program digs deeper and shows a key factor about caring that appears to be critical to answering this question.

This year's winners all have in common the ability to instill high customer

loyalty and delight by caring. In fact, it's the key to their success. But what are they caring about? Is it the home? Is it the buyers' well being? The answer is a very powerful concept most builders find germane: lifestyle. In essence, companies that actively care to truly enhance their customers' lifestyles appear to achieve greater customer delight.

To see this in action, one needs to look no further than our NRS Diamond Award winner, The Green Company, which strongly believes in such a strategy. As Dan Green, vice president and principal, succinctly puts it: "The company is selling a lifestyle, and the house comes with it." This same phi-

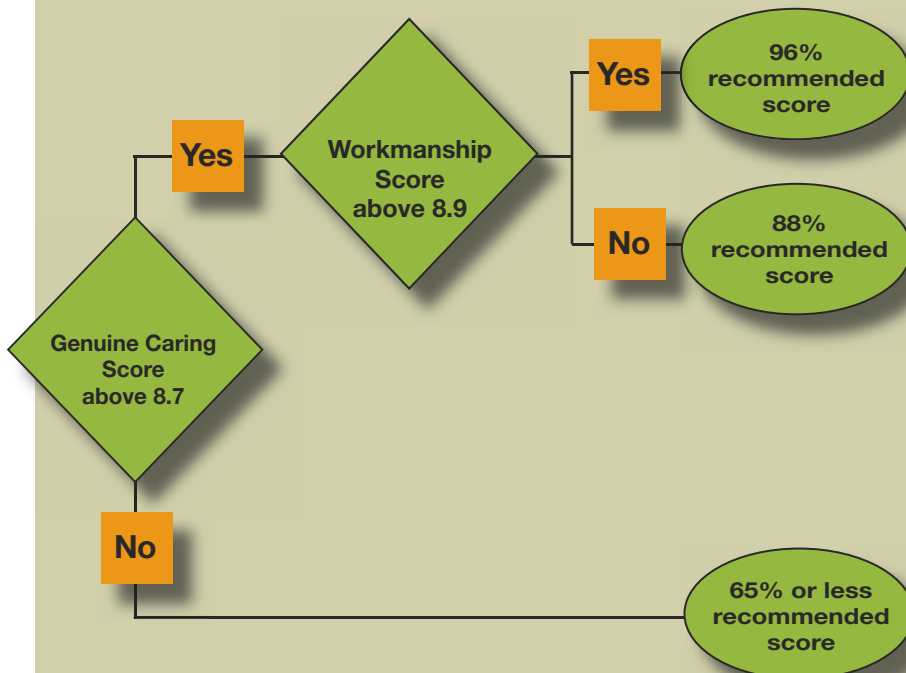
losophy can be observed in many other of this year's winners, who have placed increased emphasis on providing all of the lifestyle extras in a community that make it an experience that lasts beyond the first 30 days.

Customer satisfaction boils down to perceptions minus expectations. The value proposition of improving one's lifestyle is part of pushing customer perceptions beyond expectations. Customers' lifestyles are a big part of what builders need to care about.

The Green Company builds award-winning communities for empty nesters and supports a new way of living through community activities, designed green


### GUIDE ANALYSIS

## Results that matter



**GUIDE Analysis**, an advanced statistical tool that evaluates the award winners, shows genuine caring is a critical variable that significantly drives buyer recommendations (see chart, left).





"THE COMPANY IS SELLING A LIFESTYLE, AND THE HOUSE COMES WITH IT." — DAN GREEN

spaces and creative services. Clear across the country, Farnsworth Development (No. 1 in Phoenix) targets a similar customer base with a well-designed community that includes an activities director and expansive community facilities. These amenities have customers raving that being a part of the communities has improved their lives.

Individual profiles in this issue detail Pulte, Del Webb and Mayberry — more builders who offer ways to impart a better way of living.

Ultimately, a builder can offer expansive facilities such as tennis courts, pools and activities directors and still not have much impact on customers. The difference comes with caring that these amenities actually improve the customers' lives.

## The Right Kind of Caring

Are you offering the right kind of caring in your communities? More importantly, are you caring about your customers' lifestyle and trying to improve it in creative ways? If not, your competitors might be ahead and ultimately winning the battle for referral sales.

Read the profiles of this year's NRS Award winners on the following pages to learn about the customer-focused strategies these companies use to get ahead and stay ahead.

This year's winners clearly show how caring — when combined with great amenities and service — is the wow factor that delights buyers in 2006.

## Who Are The Best in Customer Satisfaction?

**This year's awards program** was based on a survey of 107,376 home buyers who closed on their homes in 2005. These customers represented 320 production home builders throughout the United States and Canada. For the first time in the four-year history of the program, a local market focus was taken in addition to the industry-wide comparison. The local market program examined Phoenix, one of the largest and fastest growing markets in the United States. This NRS Award-Phoenix study is the first of many markets that will be explored to help builders understand customer satisfaction from a local and industry-wide level.

**The 2006 NRS Awards are given in the following categories:**

### North American Awards:

- NRS Diamond Award – No. 1 Customer Experience in North America
- NRS Award 50-99 Closings – Best Customer Experience among 50-99 Closings
- NRS Award 100-499 Closings – Best Customer Experience among 100-499 Closings
- NRS Award 500-plus Closings – Best Customer Experience among 500-plus Closings

### Local Market Awards:

- NRS Award Phoenix – Best Customer Experience in Phoenix Area
- NRS Award Phoenix Top 5 – Among the Top 5 Customer Experience in Phoenix Area

**Congratulations to the following Winners for 2006:**

### North American Awards:

- NRS Diamond Award & NRS Award 100-499 – The Green Company, Newton, Mass.
- NRS Award 50-99 Closings – Mayberry Homes, Lansing, Mich.
- NRS Award 500-plus Closings – Mattamy Homes, Halton Division, Oakville, Ontario, Canada

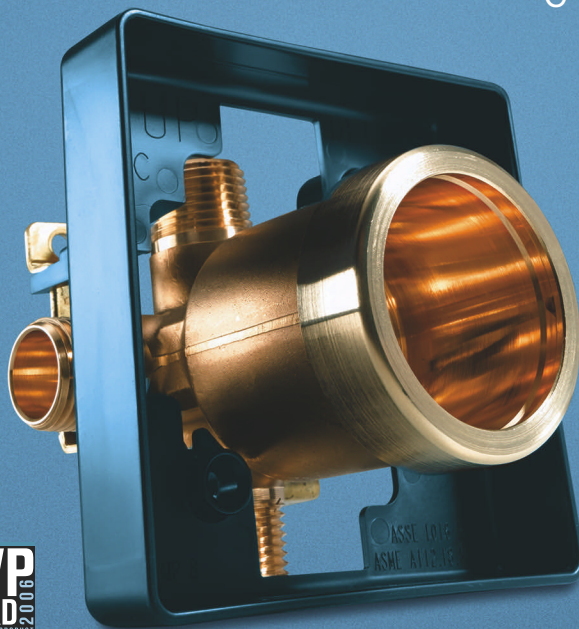
### Local Market Awards:

- NRS Award Phoenix Best Customer Experience – Farnsworth Development, Mesa, Ariz.
- NRS Award Phoenix Top 5 (listed in alphabetical order)
  - Del Webb Communities, Phoenix Division
  - Pulte Homes, Phoenix Division
  - Shea Homes, Phoenix Division
  - T.W. Lewis, Phoenix



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#### THE GREEN COMPANY'S 65

employees, not all pictured here, are a key ingredient to the company's success.

#### THE GREEN COMPANY

**Award: 2006 NRS Diamond Award Winner**

**Class:** No. 1 Customer Experience for Home Builders in North America.

**Closings:** 100-499 closings

**NRS Index score:** 188.383

**Percentage of home buyers who would recommend the builder to a friend:** 97.5%

**Percentage of home buyers who made at least one actual recommendation:** 89.3% (Of those making recommendations, 21.3% made six or more.)

#### Key Wow Factors:

- Lifestyle opportunities and community/neighborhood events
- Clarity of options and upgrades
- Post-closing services including handyman assistance
- Consistent customer contact and communication
- Home improvements and care program



Emerging Issues

# The Green Company

At The Green Company, 97.5 percent of customers would recommend it to others and 55 percent of the company's actual sales come from buyer referrals, thanks to a unique brand of customer care. This fact, in combination with the excellent customer experience surveys, puts this builder No. 1 in North America in customer satisfaction.

Customer service wasn't always a strength. In fact, the company's custom-

er satisfaction ratings didn't really start to take off until 1998, when the Newton, Mass.-based builder began its journey of professionally measuring customer satisfaction and letting the results guide it on how it would better serve home buyers. Since that time, the company has garnered the National Housing Quality Silver Award and two other top placements in the NRS Award program. In 2006, customers gave the company the





“We need to be involved with all aspects of our communities to do a good job.”  
— David Caligaris

top rating, which makes The Green Company the best in the business.

Founded by company chairman Alan Green more than 50 years ago, The Green Company has grown from a small builder on Massachusetts’s Cape Cod to a leading builder serving Boston’s suburbs. The company has catered to empty nesters for more than 25 years and is on target to close about 100 homes this year in the high \$300,000 to \$700,000 range.

Today, 65 employees work together on every aspect of the home-building process, from design and marketing to construction, sales, customer care and community management.

“We need to be involved with all aspects of our communities to do a good job,” says company President David Caligaris.

### Sense of Community

The company stays aware of its buyers, realizing not all empty nesters want to downsize their home. Many such buyers still work and lead very active lifestyles, so the social and community aspect of their new neighborhood remains important.

To create that sense of community, The Green Company provides homeowners with numerous amenities. The builder even helps the neighborhood social committee get events up and running. Most of the events promote the neighborhood lifestyle, where homes are built in clusters of two or three.

The builder also brings home buyers together via its ambassador program, whereby the company asks current residents to attend events with prospective home buyers and share their experiences with them.

### Variety in Price

To appeal to a wide variety of tastes and budgets, The Green Company offers eight models

in 11 house styles ranging from 1,100 to 2,400 square feet. Over the past few years, the builder has impressed home buyers with its reasonably priced upgrades.

### Reliability Counts

The Green Company has earned a reputation for reliability, too. The builder gives home buyers a closing date when purchasing agreements are signed and will go to great lengths to make that commitment, even switching vendors if it means more reliable deliveries.

This devotion likely comes from the company’s relationship with its trade partners: trade partners are treated as internal team members and involved in the building process. As a result, “whenever a tradesman sees a need, he does what it takes to get the company back on track,” says Caligaris.

The Green Company also ranks high for having its homes clean and ready for occupancy. Part of its quality assurance program includes several inspections. In addition to regular builder reviews and quality checklists at each step of construction, the design center and an independent builder complete separate walks prior to the final walk-through with a home buyer. The key for The Green Company is to have most every problem corrected before the home is presented to the home buyer at the pre-closing orientation. Orientation lists are small, and most all items can be completed prior to conveyance.

### Moving On

To show its appreciation, the builder presents each home buyer with a sterling silver Tiffany & Co. key chain, a photo album of the building process, and a laminated card with every department’s phone number on it — from Sales to Customer Care, Residential Services, Community Management and emergency contacts — to assure them that they are connected to the company even after closing.

With such systems in place, employees can be more spontaneous in the ways they wow customers. One sales rep arranged for customers to get a lift from a bucket loader so they could get a sense of the view they’d have from their new home.

One thing that consistently surprises new home buyers, however, is the call they get from Alan Green, the company’s founder. When prospects sign a nonbinding reservation, the chairman calls them for an informal chat and to answer any questions they may have.

“That really is unique,” Sampson says. “It’s amazing how people really love that call.”

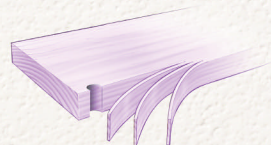
#### THE GREEN COMPANY’S TOP 5 BENCHMARKS

Question	Difference from Industry Average
Reasonable Cost of Upgrades	+ 17.12
Time Until Closing	+ 16.68
Available and Informative	+ 15.72
Home Was Clean & Ready	+ 14.50
Made Buying Pleasant	+ 14.49



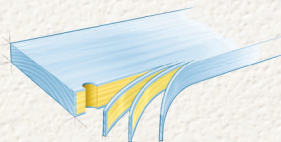


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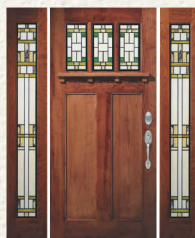
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**MATTAMY HOMES —**  
**HALTON DIVISION**  
**Award: 2006 NRS Award**

**Closings:** 500 or more closings annually

**NRS Index score:** 179.402

**Percentage of home buyers who would recommend the builder to a friend:** 96.3%

**Percentage of home buyers who made at least one actual recommendation:** 87.1% (Of those making recommendations, 27.1% made six or more.)

**Key Wow Factors:**

- Home readiness
- Mattamy University
- Genuine caring
- Community car wash
- Incredible customer loyalty



**MATTAMY HOMES' CEO** Peter Gilgan, left, and Mark McHone, Halton division president.

# Mattamy Homes - Halton Division

Mattamy Homes has invested time and resources trying to empower its employees to deliver outstanding customer service — not an easy task for an organization that builds more than 4,500 homes a year. Nevertheless, the Toronto, Canada-based company is the very first outside of the U.S. to meet this challenge head on and succeed in garnering an NRS Award.

As Canada's largest home builder and a top 20 largest builder in North America, Mattamy Homes has divisions in Toronto and Ottawa, along with U.S. divisions in Florida, Minnesota and North Carolina. The Halton division

closed 1,200 homes in the Toronto area and has won the 2006 NRS Award for 500-plus closings.

## Divisional Power

Awards like this didn't come easy for the 28-year-old company — not until Peter Gilgan, the company's founder and CEO, surveyed its customers to identify ways to improve the customer experience. Although the company had a very good reputation in the market and Gilgan was armed with a clear picture of his company, he began to restructure the company and its processes. In 2004, Gilgan split the company into divisions

— four in Canada and three in the United States. "This enabled the company to focus its efforts to better meet the needs of local markets," Gilgan says. He also recruited Mark McHone from Lennar in California to become Halton's division president and make the company a customer satisfaction leader.

Today, Mattamy Homes' Halton division primarily caters to first-time home buyers. Because of a great reputation for outstanding service, the division receives a lot of repeat business. In fact, 40 percent of its home buyers are repeat customers, McHone says, noting some customers have already moved





It's all about the little things that can make a customer delighted." — Mark McHone

into their third, fourth and even fifth Mattamy-built home. "Repeat business is a critical component of our success," he says. The company's survey results in this study showed that 96.3 percent of customers would recommend Mattamy to family and friends and 27.1 percent made 6 or more referrals.

### Relationship Development

While the company aimed to provide a stellar customer experience, it centered its efforts on building complete homes on time and having any problems discovered during orientation fixed before closing. But most importantly, the company "focused on building relationships," says Mark Parsons, vice president of construction.

The relationship-building process begins at Mattamy University, an educational session in which home buyers learn what they'll be experiencing at every phase of construction. The event

the company more money. "Two months after the new light fixtures were used, our service rating on the NRS results went up two full points," McHone says.

### Satisfaction Builders

Rather than deal with problems as they occur, the company tackles the root causes before they become customer satisfaction killers. "There are half a dozen things we are working on right now," McHone says.

With so many potential problems averted, the company spends more time providing personal services that differentiate it from other builders, such as the company's own street cleaner that keeps the streets tidy for current residents during construction on other homes. Mattamy also stations employees with pressure hoses at the entrance to the subdivision to spray cars clean of construction dust as their owners drive home — a novel solution to a pervasive industry problem.

In the spring, Mattamy sponsors community barbecues and hosts a Flowerfest, whereby homeowners come to the park and select plants to enhance their yards — all provided free by the builder. This event helps the communities look great and creates a sense of community spirit, which is an important issue in first-time buyer communities.

A preemptive attitude is also pervasive throughout the organization. Consider the walk-through process. For most builders, a good walk-through is one that uncovers few — if any — items that need fixing. But that's not good enough for Mattamy. "It should be a celebration; not an inspection," says Parsons. To make sure there's cause for cheer, the company performs a quality assurance inspection 20 days before closing and creates a list for the builder to fix. "The QA process looks at the home with homeowner eyes but without the homeowner," he says. Before implementing this system, Mattamy would have 20-30 items on the walk-through list. Now there are only a few items on average, if any.

Although the team is passionate about product quality, "it's all about the little things that can make a customer delighted," says McHone. Whenever a Mattamy vehicle comes to a four-way stop, the Mattamy vehicle lets the other cars through first. If they see someone carrying packages from their car, they stop and help. One time, a woman became stranded in her car on the way to dropping off her child at dance class, so the Mattamy employee took the child to dance class and called a service vehicle to tow the car and take the homeowner home.

#### MATTAMY HOMES-HALTON'S TOP 5 BENCHMARKS

Question	Difference from Industry Average
Recommend to a Friend	+ 9.64
Perception of Orientation Items	+ 9.37
Explained Construction Process	+ 8.66
Responsive to Concerns	+ 8.43
Home Was Clean and Ready	+ 8.40

features presentations by the actual employees building the homes, as well as the design and decor staff. "We gain a lot of respect by having our junior staff presenting. It starts the relationship off on the right foot," says Parsons.

To change how employees were delivering service at all levels, there were company-wide challenges to reach the next level. "We put together action plans and assigned responsibility and timelines," McHone says. Then the company surveyed home buyers to gauge any shift in its performance. When survey results were positive, the company celebrated. "That excitement generated more excitement," McHone says. "It almost turned it into a competition," Parsons adds.

In fact, the home buyer surveys have become a key management tool. For example, when the surveys showed that home buyers weren't satisfied with the light fixtures, McHone charged the contracts person to find better fixtures without costing



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# Mayberry Homes



**BOB AND KAREN SCHROEDER,**  
owners of Mayberry Homes.

## MAYBERRY HOMES

**Award: 2006 NRS Award**

**Closings:** Fewer than 100 closings

**NRS Index score:** 181.513

**Percentage of home buyers who would recommend the builder to a friend:** 96.2%

**Percentage of home buyers who made at least one actual recommendation:** 85.2% (Of those making recommendations, 14.8% made six or more.)

### Key Wow Factors:

- Personalized acts of kindness
- Proactive warranty service
- 24/7 home access during construction
- Customer appreciation events
- Clarity of options and upgrades

**B**ob and Karen Schroeder, owners of Mayberry Homes in Lansing, Mich., have only been in business since 2002, yet they have garnered more awards for customer satisfaction than most veteran builders. Mayberry Homes caters to first-time home buyers and those moving up from starter homes, as well as higher-end empty nesters.

The Schroeders share a passion for building homes. They have a reputation for being responsible builders with a sense of ecology.

### Family Unit

The Schroeders say they try to make their 12 employees feel important to the group. They also foster a shared vision about customer service that focuses on genuine caring; it's much easier to honestly care about your

customers than it is to create a lot of rules to make it look like you do, Bob says.

Karen believes owners who exude a sense of happiness about the business have a happier staff. She says she always wanted to build a company with employees who enjoy working there; respect and believe in each other; and are treated like they belong.

"I've always said, when it stops being fun, I don't want to do it anymore," she says.

### Key to Communication

Mayberry Homes exceeds expectations in many other ways, small and large. Every home buyer receives a master key the day construction begins — and

encouragement to visit the house whenever they want.

Mayberry, with the volunteer efforts of its contractors, has donated three houses to St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital for the Dream Home Giveaway raffle.

"It makes a statement that this is a values-driven company that cares," Bob says. "And that can't be faked."

## MAYBERRY HOMES' TOP 5 BENCHMARKS

Question	Difference from Industry Average
Reasonable Cost of Upgrades	+ 16.76
Time To Correct Walk-Through Items	+ 14.27
Home Was Clean and Ready	+ 14.27
Time Until Closing	+ 14.04
Number of Orientation Problems Corrected	+ 11.69



# Del Webb Communities and Pulte Homes – Phoenix Division

## PULTE HOMES – PHOENIX DIVISION

**Award: 2006 NRS Award – Phoenix Winner**

**Class:** No. 5 out of 41 Phoenix Area Builders

**NRS Index score:** 164.249

**Percentage of home buyers who would recommend the builder to a friend:** 86.2%

**Percentage of home buyers who made at least one actual recommendation:** 80.7% (Of those making recommendations, 29.8% made six or more.)

## DEL WEBB COMMUNITIES – PHOENIX DIVISION

**Award: 2006 NRS Award – Phoenix Winner**

**Class:** No. 2 out of 41 Phoenix Area Builders

**NRS Index score:** 174.402

**Percentage of home buyers who would recommend the builder to a friend:** 90.4%

**Percentage of home buyers who made at least one actual recommendation:** 85.8% (Of those making recommendations, 33.4% made six or more.)

With a presence in 54 markets throughout the U.S., Pulte is the largest home builder in North America. In Arizona alone the company operates four divisions: one in Tucson and three in Phoenix, under the direction of John Chadwick, Arizona division president. Meanwhile, Del Webb, which was one of the first big home builders to recognize Phoenix's potential as a retirement Mecca, is a brand under the Pulte umbrella. Because the Pulte and Del Webb names are marketed independently, they were considered separate entities for the purpose of the NRS Awards, and both ranked among the top five. Del Webb ranked second and Pulte ranked fifth among the 41 builders in the Phoenix market.

## Customer Service Philosophy

Pulte embarked on a new customer relations program a few years ago focused on the idea of creating “homeowners for life.” At the cornerstone of the program is the simple idea that everyone in the company, including the trades, must treat home buyers the way they want to be treated. “We work hard to hire the right people at Pulte,” says Reed Graham, vice president of customer relations.

In addition to ensuring that its staff is customer-focused, Pulte uses technology to ensure warranty repairs are efficiently handled. When visiting a customer's home, service agents carry hand-held computers to quickly process orders using a touch screen and streamline the warranty process. The computers generate work orders back at the office. “There is a direct correlation between how long it takes to get a repair done and how happy the homeowner is,” says Graham.

Pulte offers a 1-2-5-10 warranty. For one year, all workmanship and products in the house are covered. For two years, mechanicals — such as HVAC, electri-



PHOTOGRAPH: MARC BERLOW

**JOHN CHADWICK**, Arizona division president

cal and plumbing — are covered. For five years, anything that leaks — plumbing, roof, windows or doors — is covered. And for 10 years, the structure is covered.

Like other successful builders, Pulte prefers to treat the walk-through as a celebration, not an inspection. To set the mood, home buyers might come into the home and hear music playing and smell coffee brewing and cookies baking. “It maximizes the customer experience,” Graham says.

To help set the tone for the walk-through, Pulte uses a magnet posted on the garage door to alert contractors to clean up the area in front of the house. “When workers see the magnet, they know that the home buyers will be coming by, so they move vehicles out of the way, pick up trash and make the area in front of the new home look as nice as possible,” says Graham. “The homeowner shows up and there's like a little halo glowing around the house.”



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# Farnsworth Development

PHOTOGRAPH: MARC BERLOW



**CRAIG AHLSTROM**, left,  
and company founder Ross  
Farnsworth

**F**arnsworth Development has truly set itself apart as a company that uses customer service to thrive in a hyper-sensitive market. With about 10,000 homes to its credit, the builder is a mainstay in the Phoenix area, where it has been doing business since 1958. The secret of the company's success is a caring and customer-focused company culture that has developed a unique independence over the decades.

Company founder Ross Farnsworth,

who is still active as owner and chairman, saw the potential for retirement housing in the East Valley of Phoenix, and the company hasn't strayed from that target market ever since.

Craig Ahlstrom, president and CEO, says the company built about 250 homes last year and has another 200 slated by the end of 2006. The Farnsworth team is withstanding market downturns with a positive outlook because referrals keep coming in the door.

## FARNSWORTH DEVELOPMENT

**Award: 2006 NRS Award – Phoenix Winner**

**Class:** No. 1 out of 41 Phoenix Area Builders

**NRS Index Score:** 187.09

**Percentage of home buyers who would recommend the builder to a friend:** 100%

**Percentage of home buyers who made at least one actual recommendation:** 93.3% (Of those making recommendations, 53.3% made six or more.)

### Key Wow Factors:

- Lifestyle opportunities and community/neighborhood events
- Own and operate key trade contractors
- Same day customer service
- Employee loyalty and company culture
- Customer referral ratings

**HAL LOONEY**,  
Arizona division  
president



## SHEA HOMES

**Award: 2006 NRS Award – Phoenix Winner**

**Class:** No. 4 out of 41 Phoenix Area Builders

**NRS Index score:** 165.346

**Percentage of home buyers who would recommend the builder to a friend:** 87.5%

**Percentage of home buyers who made at least one actual recommendation:** 81.8% (Of those making recommendations, 29.6% made six or more.)

# Shea Homes

**S**hea Homes ranks number four on the list of top performing builders in the Phoenix market. Shea builds homes in a variety of price points, ranging from \$200,000 entry-level homes to \$1 million luxury houses. It built about 2,500 homes in 2005 and looks to finish 2006 with about 1,750 — a reflection of the softening market in Phoenix affecting virtually all builders in the area. The company uses home buyer surveys to improve and check if it is meeting customer expectations.

## In the Bank

Shea aims to meet customer expectations by communicating and setting realistic expectations up front. After home buyers sign purchasing agreements, they are invited to a construction orientation meeting in which

superintendents walk them through the different stages of construction. For attending, home buyers are given \$500 — which Shea considers money well spent.

## Post-Escrow Satisfaction

The builder also schedules home buyer meetings one month after escrow to refresh them on the orientation and offer tips on maintaining their homes. Similar meetings are also scheduled five and 11 months after escrow to make sure customer satisfaction remains high throughout the warranty period.

Homeowners can request warranty requests online or by phone. They have the option of having a repair taken care of immediately or waiting until one of the three post-escrow meetings.



## T.W. LEWIS

**Award: 2006 NRS Award  
– Phoenix Winner**

**Class:** No. 3 out of 41 Phoenix Area Builders

**NRS Index score:** 169.106

**Percentage of home buyers who would recommend the builder to a friend:** 93.7%

**Percentage of home buyers who made at least one actual recommendation:** 75.0% (Of those making recommendations, 39.3 percent made six or more.)

# T.W. Lewis

**T**W. Lewis' excellent customer loyalty ranking helps make it No. 3 out of 41 on the list of top performing builders in the Phoenix market as a higher-end luxury production builder. Homes range between \$500,000 and \$850,000. The builder delivered 350 homes in 2005 and another 330 are expected by 2006's end.


Like most Phoenix builders, T.W. Lewis is experiencing a market correction. Nevertheless, the company is holding its own quite well in a competitive market.

The Tempe, Ariz., builder's customers primarily comprise second- and third-time home buyers looking to move up, as well as some empty nesters who might partly




PHOTOGRAPH: MARC BERLOW

**KEVIN EGAN**, president, T.W. Lewis.



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account for the company's resilience in a tight market.


In the study, 93.7 percent of T.W. Lewis' customers said they would recommend it to family and friends. Even more impressive is the sizable 39.3 percent of its customers who actually made six or more.

"We believe our commitment to quality and customer satisfaction is the most important factor in sustaining our future growth and success," says company President Kevin Egan.

The company has customer-centric leadership and backs it up with a significant investment in staff per home built. With an average of only eight homes per construction manager compared with an industry average of 20 homes per manager, T.W. Lewis maintains one of the industry's highest numbers of personnel per home built. Employees are in contact with each customer every week of construction. Survey results indicate customers thought T.W. Lewis explained the construction process better than any other builder in Phoenix.

In addition to consistent communication, the T.W. Lewis team frequently checks work quality throughout the organization; area managers regularly check on houses to ensure everything is right. Such rigor earns T.W. Lewis its spot among the best in the valley.





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# Proactive Solutions

>> BY FELICIA OLIVER, SENIOR EDITOR

## Perfect (Green) Match

New online service pairs users with energy-efficient contractors

**Green builders, have we got a match for you. VerdeEnergy.com — a free online Web site** — has been matching pre-screened green professionals called Verde Pros with customers who provide their project information through an online survey. Users receive competitive bids from up to four contractors in their area who will contact them personally about their project.

"We're introducing a resource to homeowners and businesses across the country that connects their service request with trusted renewable energy experts in their local area," said Rob

electric, fuel cells and energy auditing.

"Most contractors are very familiar with these kinds of lead generating services," says Powell.

Builders have used the service to secure bids for portions of their building projects.

"We expect that to be a pretty common scenario going forward," says Powell. "A large chunk of the business we do now is related to new construction, though the majority is in retrofit installations."

Contractors are pre-screened based on experience and training;

licensing; outstanding legal judgments; insurance and bonding; and customer references.

"We do the due diligence that any smart consumer would do," says Powell. "We encourage users, of course, to do their own follow up. But we're trying to save people the legwork and match them up with quality contractors."

The screenshot shows the VerdeEnergy.com website. At the top, it says "VERDE ENERGY" and "AMERICA'S TRUSTED SOURCE FOR RENEWABLE ENERGY SERVICES". Below this is a blue banner with the text "GET MATCHED WITH PRESCREENED RENEWABLE ENERGY PROFESSIONALS FOR YOUR SOLAR, WIND, HYDRO AND FUEL CELL PROJECTS". Under the banner is a form titled "DESCRIBE YOUR PROJECT" with a dropdown menu set to "Solar Power - Residential" and a "CONTINUE" button. Below the form are three columns of text:

- Get Competitive Quotes**: Planning a solar power installation, wind power or other renewable energy project? Get trusted expert contractors competing for your business. [Complete a Service Request >](#)
- How It Works**: Find trusted renewable energy specialists in a few easy steps:
  - Step 1 - Complete the online survey to describe your project and provide us your contact details >
  - Step 2 - Receive a personalized renewable energy rebate and incentive analysis >
  - Step 3 - Receive competitive bids from Verde Professionals in your area [more >](#)
- Work With The Best**: Verde Energy matches homeowners and commercial customers with renewable energy contractors that have been carefully screened using our member enrollment criteria. [more >](#)

At the bottom right, there is a "VERDE APPROVED" logo and text: "Interested in receiving qualified sales leads within your ideal service area? Request A Callback >

Powell, chief executive officer for Verde Energy. "We provide a competitive marketplace of services to customers and a qualified, targeted marketing channel to contractors."

Customers receive project assistance from professionals with specialized experience and training in renewable energy services, including solar, wind, hydro-



>> BY LAURA BUTALLA, SENIOR EDITOR

## Check Your Energy Code Know-How Online

THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY (DOE) recently launched Rescheck 101, a self-paced online training course for its Rescheck software. The software allows builders to check the basic compliance codes with the 2003 International Energy Conservation Code (IECC).

More than 30 states accepted Rescheck as a way to demonstrate energy code compliance, so the DOE decided to offer online training for the software. "Online training allows us to reach even more designers, builders and code officials who want to use Rescheck," says Pacific Northwest National Laboratory's Rose Bartlett, training manager for DOE's Building Energy Codes Program. "They can learn how to use the software from their desktop at their own pace."

The online training takes one to two hours to complete. The purpose: to help users understand the 2003 IECC requirements and test knowledge of the codes. Users can even build an example house with the codes. Additional resources and Web links to expand the user's knowledge of energy-efficient building techniques is also available. For more information, visit [www.energycodes.gov](http://www.energycodes.gov).



**THE GUNNISON MODEL AT BELTERRA IN AUSTIN, TEXAS**, designed by KF Architects – formerly Kipp Flores Architects — of Austin, comes in at 3,315 square feet and is base-priced at \$323,950. Buyers can make any change they want to the plan at the Wilshire Homes sales center and have a solid price quote the same day.





# Have It Your Way

Texas Giant Wilshire Homes uses Burger King's customization strategy to sell houses.

**You're looking at the 3,315 square-foot Gunnison**, Wilshire Homes' new model home at Belterra, a 1,400-home master planned community in Austin, Texas. If you like it and want to buy one just like it, that's fine. But the big story here is that if you want to change something about it — anything — you can. Wilshire will produce a custom set of plans, price your changes in the sales office and start construction of your new home in 56 days.

"We're not guessing when we quote a price on a custom change," says Wilshire principal and CEO Ed Horne. "Instead of having a database of pre-priced options that has to be constantly updated to stay current with changing costs, we have a computerized capability to take all the variables in any custom change request and quote a price that exactly matches what we are selling, based on our actual costs."

## Speed Matters

Austin-based Wilshire, which closed 571 houses in 2005 for \$151 million in revenue, has been working on its customization system since 1999 and has had it operational for five years. It's the centerpiece of Horne's strategic plan to move his firm to the forefront of the move-up market in Austin and San Antonio. Horne expects to close 600 homes this year, with an average price just under \$300,000. A related but separate firm — Wilshire Homes Houston — will close another 250 houses at the same price point. That company, a partnership between Horne and Houston builder Brian Binash, will have this customization system up and running in 2007.

The Gunnison illustrates Wilshire's approach to selling houses. The firm

had sold six houses by mid-October at Belterra since opening the model in August. Two of those sales were Gunnisons, but neither of those sales exactly matches the four-bedroom home as it is modeled. While listening to people talk as they tour a model home,

## VITAL STATS

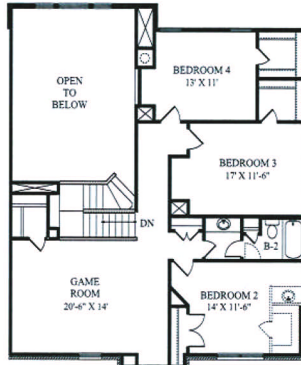
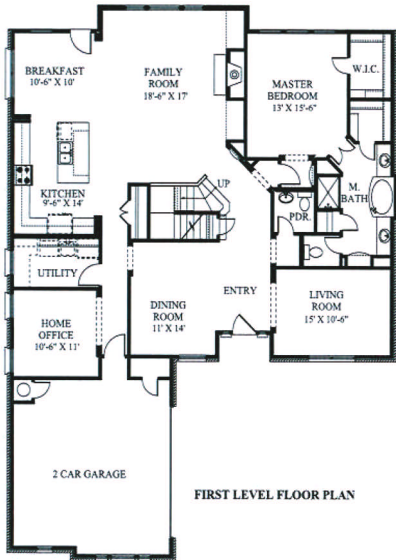
### Belterra

**Location:** Austin, Texas  
**Neighborhood:** Master planned community of 1,400 homes  
**Builder:** Wilshire Homes  
**Architect:** KF Architects, Austin, Texas  
**Interior merchandiser:** Becky Myers, Wilshire Design Group, Austin, Texas  
**Developer:** Makar, Austin, Texas  
**Home type:** Front loaded, single-family detached  
**Lot size:** 70 feet by 130 feet  
**Model:** Gunnison  
**Square footage:** 3,315  
**Price:** \$323,950  
**Model open:** August 2006  
**Sales:** 6  
**Gunnison sales:** 2  
**Buyer profile:** Move-up families





**WILSHIRE HOMES** builds the Gunnison for an average hard cost of \$58 a square foot on 70-foot by 130-foot serviced lots that cost \$60,000 each.



“you’ll often hear someone say, ‘I love this house, but I just wish...’ There’s always something they’d like to change,” says Wilshire vice president of product development Brian Lott. Rather than trying to sell them what we want to build, we have the ability to sell them the house they really want. One hundred percent of our sales now incorporate some kind of design change.”

Horne is positioning Wilshire to align with massive, grassroots changes in consumer behavior after the company examined the marketplace. It found three changes it could make to differentiate from public builders new to the market. “First, people want it their way, and technology is now making that possible,” he asserts. “That’s the Burger King differentiator that McDonald’s and others are now copying. You can buy a computer from Dell online and get exactly the features you

want without any you don’t want to pay for,” Horne says. “Second, they want it now. Speed matters. That’s why we have a goal to get from contract on a customized plan to construction start in 45 days. We’re not there yet, but 56 days is pretty good. We want to be able to deliver houses 180 days after contract. We’re now averaging 186 days.

“And third, the total customer experience — from first contact to five years after closing — must exceed their expectations to create raving fans and referral sales. We have a goal to maintain 93 percent ‘would recommend’ on our customer satisfaction surveys,” Horne says. “If we can maintain that while delivering point of sale pricing on 80 floor plans and thousands of custom variations, we will really have something.”

## How It Works

Horne says Wilshire will soon quote pricing on any custom change to any of its floor plans within an hour. “Right now, 80 percent of the cost of a house is electronically generated, virtually instantly. But on the remaining 20 percent, we still have to do manual calculations, so the outside limit for quoting a price is 24 hours, but it only takes that long on complex structural changes. The vast majority of custom changes are already priced within an hour.”

To automate the customization process, Wilshire had to change the way it buys products, materials and construction labor, as well as the way it sells and delivers homes. “We had to develop unit pricing for our entire system,” Horne reveals. “We now buy everything by the unit, whether it’s a toilet or a cubic foot of drywall.”

To know how many units it has to buy to make a custom change, Wilshire developed translators that turn design calculations such as cubic feet of



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**BECKY MYERS** of Wilshire Homes' in-house interior design group sought a sense of casual elegance while planning for the Gunnison.

drywall into the measure by which drywall is sold — sheets. “We developed a proprietary computer program we call our Expert Estimating System (EES),” Horne says. “We own that software. It takes the units we use in design — like cubic feet — and translates them into the units vendors use to sell us the materials we need. Brick is a better example. We know the square footage of the portion of a wall where we plan to put brick. EES translates that into the exact number of bricks we need to buy.”

Roofing is translated from square feet to squares, which is how it's sold. But for all these material units of measure, there's another component of cost that has to be included: labor. “We had to work with all our trades, as well as our vendors, to break everything we buy down to a combined material and labor cost for an installed unit,” Horne says.

Wilshire then developed a way to calculate the unit costs within a computerized design process. The firm used SoftPlan, an architectural Computer-Aided Design system (CAD), to convert its house plans to 3-D drawings. “We can now develop material quantities based on cubic feet in the design, and EES allows us to translate those quantities from a 3-D CAD drawing into the units of measure we buy from vendors and trades,” Horne states. “Finally, EES converts all that into an electronic purchase order, so we are automatically buying exactly the quantity needed to make the custom change.”

Out in the sales center, this computerized capability is marketed as Built Around You, which is more than just a customization system: it's a phi-

losophy of doing business. “We ask people what they want, then we quote them a price to achieve their dream — fast,” Horne explains. “We don't hand them a set of floor plans, price list and specification sheet for what we're willing to build. You might decide an 8-foot door is not as important as 42-inch cabinets in the kitchen,” Horne reasons. “We'll help you make those choices and compromises based on what you want, not what we're willing to do. We allow people to make more selections than any other production builder offers, and we work through the process and deliver their dream home faster — and at a lower price — than a custom builder.”

Wilshire's ability to fit every product to each individual buyer is a powerful differentiator against public builders, Horne maintains. “If you go into a McDonald's restaurant today, you'll find that they're meeting Burger King's competition, but the public builders are not meeting ours. Our competitors' eyes glaze over when they shop our product and see how we sell houses,” Horne says.

And there's an even more important element to it than point of sale custom pricing, Horne says. “It's the change in attitude of all our people, who now understand that their job is to serve the customer. That's a huge psychological change, and one that we believe is the key to customer satisfaction that lasts five years or more after closing.

“We don't want to just design it their way, we want to build it right.” **PB**



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**THE WILMINGTON** is available in a variety of architectural styles and color packages. In addition to a two-car garage, a stripped driveway fits two cars and leads to a porte cochere that fits another.





# Plan to Vacation, Stay to Live

Bayside offers mid-Atlantic urbanites a getaway before and after retirement.

**The Delmarva Peninsula around** Delaware, Maryland and Virginia has been a vacation and second-home destination for years, and Carl M. Freeman Communities has developed resort communities there for more than 30 years. Homeowners from Philadelphia, New York, Washington D.C., Baltimore and other mid-Atlantic cities appreciate the two tributaries and waterfront.

The developer's newest project is Bayside, a master planned golf course community in Selbyville, Del., that exemplifies the three best known tenets of real estate: location, location, location.

Set square in Delmarva territory, Bayside "lends itself to a Jack Nicklaus Signature Golf Course to take advantage of those water views," says Katie Avsec, the marketing director for Carl M. Freeman Communities.

When complete, Bayside will offer

1,640 units of single-family homes, townhomes, duplexes and condominiums. Amenities include a fitness center; recreation areas for water sports, hiking and biking; five pools; and a town center with retail space and restaurants. The community offers both golf and sports memberships; the latter provides access to all amenities on the property.

Of its 867 acres, 287 have been set aside for a conservation easement. A future environmental center will teach

the community about preservation of natural resources, Avsec says.

## Opportunities

Bayside's primary targets are second-home buyers, empty nesters and pre- and post-retirees. The location appeals to mid-Atlantic residents who will retire but don't want to move to Florida because of the distance it would put between them and family and friends.

"They can even keep their own doctors," says Avsec. "The proximity and familiarity allow many to buy their homes as vacation property a few years before they are ready to retire and start to

## VITAL STATS

### Bayside

**Location:** Selbyville, Del.

**Builder/Developer:** Carl M. Freeman Communities

**Neighborhood:** Master planned Waterfront Golf Resort Community

**Architect:** The Evans Group, Orlando, Fla.

**Model:** The Wilmington

**Home type:** Single-family detached

**Square footage:** 2,630

**Market:** Delmarva Peninsula region

**Base price:** \$599,000

**Community size:** 1,640 units

**Buyer profile:** Pre-retirees seeking a second home or vacation home that could become their primary home.

**Sales results:** All four initial Wilmington homes were sold immediately; other Wilmington home styles will be released in the future.



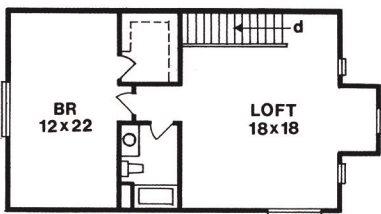
PHOTOGRAPHY: GREG HADLEY

**A UNIQUE FEATURE** of the Wilmington model: the oversized screened porch.

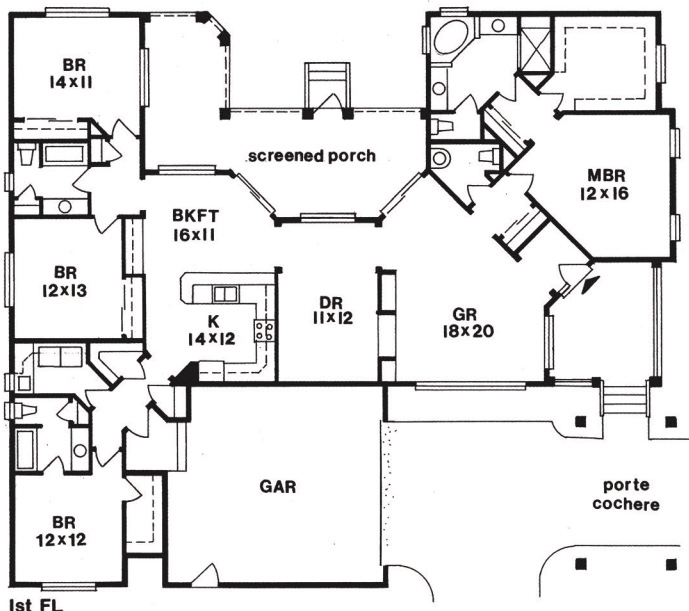




**THE GOURMET KITCHEN**, above, sits steps from the enclosed side porch. The great room's, plentiful windows, right, let in natural light.



OPT 2nd FL



1st FL

build friends and network here locally. That makes relocating for retirement a lot easier for them.”

Don Evans, principal of Orlando, Fla.-based The Evans Group and architect for Bayside, was surprised at what some of their market research revealed. For example, rain, sleet or snow wouldn't deter people from making the drive up every weekend.

“That's what the Delmarva Peninsula is all about,” Evans says. “People want to live in a resort setting, but they want to use it all year round.”

Bayside offers 28 floor plans. Carl M. Freeman has released a limited number of each for development, including four of the 2,630 square foot Wilmington model.

“Of the single-family home sites that have been released to date, the Wilmington has been the most popular choice for people and has sold the quickest,” says Karen Dunn, product development director for Carl Freeman. “Every time we've had a Wilmington home site become available, it has sold right away.”

The Wilmington's base price is about \$600,000. Depending on options, it can cost as much as \$1 million, the price at which the model, which opened in June 2005, sold.

## Obstacles

The team tackled coming up with a design for the Wilmington that could address the fluctuating needs of a variety of buyers.



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**THE OVERSIZED SCREEN PORCH** is easily accessible from the kitchen and the breakfast nook.



**THE OPTIONAL SECOND FLOOR LOFT** can be used as a retreat for children or young adults or a private area for guests.



“We were trying to be everything to everyone,” says Evans, “which normally you are told not to do. But Carl Freeman asked us to work at that goal, and we said yes.”

The Wilmington floor plan has four bedrooms on the first level, including an owner’s suite. The other three bedrooms can be used as dens, offices or studio space to meet the needs of individual homeowners.

The oversized screened porch on the side of the house — unique to the Wilmington model — follows trends for outdoor living and entertaining, says Dunn. Homeowners can access the porch from the great room and gourmet kitchen and eating area.

An optional second floor could provide a retreat for children and young adults or a private area for guests. A large loft with separate bedroom and bath is one option; a fifth suite is another. The second floor option can add as much as 856 additional square feet.

Evans calls the second page of options “flexes.” “All the big builders offer them today. People think because they can customize it and make choices that they’re getting a custom home. People want to feel that you are acclimating the home for their lifestyle.”

The Wilmington comes in three architectural styles: colonial revival, folk Victorian, and shingle; each style offers a choice of six exterior color packages. Interior options range from mechanicals and electricals to flooring or paint finishes.

“Choice for our buyers is one of our cornerstones,” says Dunn.

“We sat in a room with all the marketing people,” says Evans. “They asked, ‘Okay, what if one of the kids is going to school in D.C., the other to another college in the area, and they’re meeting mom and dad at the shore for the weekend, and they bring their friends with them. What do they do?’ I said, ‘Okay, here’s what we do.’”

“For example,” Evans continues, “We feared that on the weekends when everybody was there the street would look like a used car lot. I decided I was going to do a strip driveway to get to the porte cochere. You can park one car in the porte cochere, two in the driveway outside the garage, and two in the garage. So now I’ve got five cars parked without being in the front.”

## Outcome

Bayside has been hugely successful to date. A large presale in June 2004 netted 150 sales in about one weekend, says Avsec. “At this point in time we’ve settled about 160 homes in the community from the sales that occurred two years ago. We’ve sold 460 homes. We anticipate it’s going to be a 10- to 12-year build-out.”

“There are only three counties in Delaware, and they’re somewhat antiquated,” says Evans. “They’ve never had anything like Bayside. It’s sitting between Atlantic City and Ocean City, Md. It’s drawing from the biggest market base in the country. The market was so wide open.” **PB**

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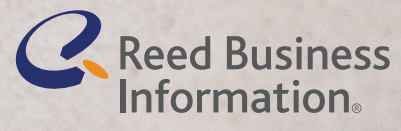


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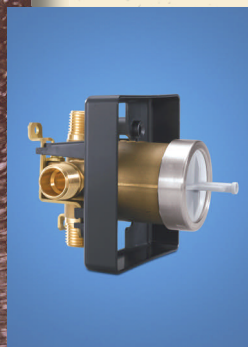
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## BEST IN CLASS

# Best in Class Winners Give Builders What They Need



Quality, customer service and a good warranty rank most important with builders.

## Professional Builder's 2006 Best in Class Survey

covers a wide swath of the home building industry, from toilets to housewrap and windows to floorboards. We sent top builders a survey that asked them to rate the qualities that draw them in and keep them with a manufacturer and their products.

Though most of the responses are a veritable who's who of the manufacturing industry it is important to note that brand recognition, an obvious first guess, was farther down the list than you might think. Quality (43 percent) was overwhelmingly named as most important with builders when it came to choosing a product, suggesting that it's not all in the name — or in the price. The rest of the categories aren't as dramatic in their differences but still tell where builders' priorities lie.

Customer service (16.6 percent) ranks a clear second. This category includes product support and knowledgeable sales people. Excellent warranties are a close third with 14 percent of the responses. Rounding out the top five, are all elements related to customer service, such as a wide range of products from the manufacturer (10.9 percent) and finally, at number five, prices (9.8 percent). Rounding out the bottom were advertising and trade-off contacts; training and support; and all other mentions.

The survey, which was conducted over the summer, ran the gamut of company sizes and specialties. Out of those 400-plus builder responses we compiled a list of the products most often mentioned, and out of that list we chose the winners of the 2006 Best in Class Survey.

**Fiber cement siding** is more popular with builders in the South (62.1 percent), while only 49.4 percent in the Northeast, 46.2 percent in the Midwest and 56 percent in the West buy it.



**Vinyl Windows** have much more acceptance in the West; 80 percent of builders specify vinyl windows in that region compared with just fewer than 70 percent on average in the other regions.



## The Best in Class

### EXTERIOR PRODUCTS

CATEGORY	WINNER
Decking	Trex
Entry Doors	Therma-Tru
Exterior Moulding and Trim	Fypon
Garage Doors	Overhead
Manufactured Stone	Cultured Stone
Patio Doors	Andersen
Roofing	CertainTeed
Fiber Cement Siding	James Hardie
Vinyl Siding	CertainTeed
Skylights	Velux
Composite Windows	Andersen
Vinyl Windows	Andersen
Wood Windows	Andersen
<b>Overall Exterior Products Winner</b>	<b>CertainTeed</b>

### INTERIOR PRODUCTS

Appliances - Kitchen	General Electric
Appliances - Laundry	Maytag
Bathroom Faucets	Delta
Cabinets	Merillat
Caulk/Sealants	DAP
Countertops	Corian
Fireplaces	Heatilator
Glass Block	PPG
HVAC Systems	Trane Residential Systems
Interior Doors	Masonite
Kitchen Faucets	Moen
Lighting Fixtures	Progress
Locksets & Hardware	Schlage
Interior Moulding & Trim	Georgia-Pacific
Paints/Stains/Finishes	Sherwin-Williams
Plumbing Fixtures (sinks, tubs)	Kohler
Toilets	Kohler
Water Heaters	A.O. Smith
<b>Overall Interior Products Winner</b>	<b>Kohler</b>

NOTE: Cabinets No. 1 was "Custom"

NOTE: Countertops No. 1 was "Granite"

NOTE: Interior trim No. 1 was "Custom made"

## Composite windows

are more popular among western builders than those in any other region; 66.7 percent purchase composite windows compared with 43.2 percent in the Northeast, 44.2 percent in the Midwest and 42.9 percent in the South.



### BEHIND THE WALL

Housewrap	Tyvek
Insulation: Fiberglass	Owens Corning
Insulation: Foam	Owens Corning
Insulation: Rigid	Owens Corning
Nails	Paslode
OSB	Georgia-Pacific
Pipe/Tubing	PEX
Plywood	Georgia-Pacific
Radiant Floor Heating	Uponor (formerly Wirsbo)
Gypsum Wallboard	U.S. Gypsum
Wet Area Wallboard	U.S. Gypsum
Wiring Devices	Leviton/Decora
<b>Overall Behind the Wall Winner</b>	<b>Owens Corning</b>

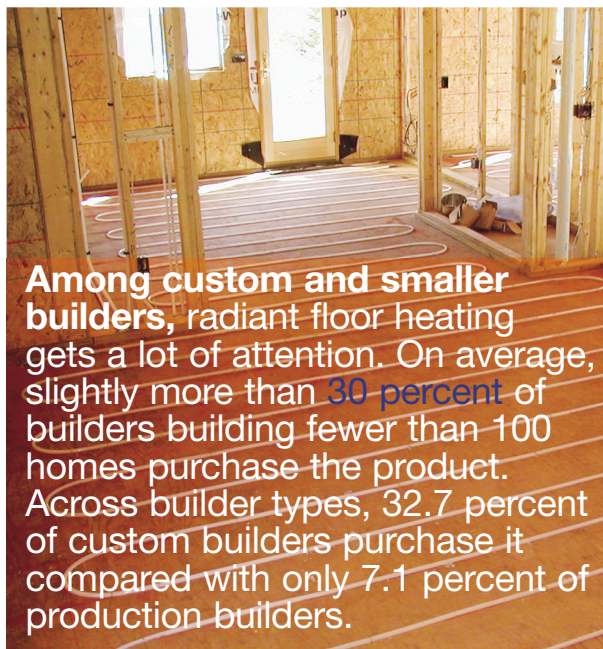
### MISCELLANEOUS

Hand Tools	Stanley
Power Tools	DeWalt
Trucks	Ford
Vans	Ford
National Lending Firm	Wells Fargo



## Best In Class Survey Rankings

CATEGORY	% RESPONSES
Quality Products	43
Customer Service	16.6
Good Warranty	14
Wide/Great Selection/Product Line	10.9
Great Prices	9.8
Timely Shipping and Delivery	7.2
Name Recognition	6
Good Literature	5.7
Durability/Long-Lasting	4.5
Advertising/Trade-Off Contacts	3.8
Dependable/Reliable	3.4
Consistency	2.7
Quick Response Time	2.6
Excellent Training and Support	2.3
Research and Product Development	1.9
There When We Need It	1.9
All Other Mentions	18.5



**Fireplaces** receive an equal amount of attention across most regions (68.4 percent on average) while Northeast builders, surprisingly, are less likely to purchase (53.1 percent).

**Builders in the Northeast** (80.2 percent) are more likely to purchase skylights compared with all other regions (Midwest: 64.4 percent; South: 50.7 percent; West: 64 percent).





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that make every room in the home more beautiful.

Recently in honor of its 80<sup>th</sup> year, Masonite launched a special edition of the Masonite® Molded Panel Series, adding to their winning collection of interior doors.

Masonite's Anniversary Collection is unique, providing the ultimate in wood door authenticity with all of the benefits of a composite wood product. The collection's featured product is the Cheyenne™ Two Panel Plank Smooth interior door. Its striking panel profile and beautiful beaded planks, creates the perfect rustic country or western look. Masonite will be introducing the Glenview™ 3-Panel Smooth as the next addition to the Anniversary Collection by the end of 2006. Glenview provides a very affordable solution to the popular Craftsman or Mission design trends. The surface is smooth and perfect for painting and decorating.



The Anniversary Collection complements Masonite's tremendously successful Palazzo Series®. Crafted in the tradition of the finest Italian designers, Masonite's Palazzo™

interior doors add elegance and warmth to any home. Customers can choose from the curved arches of the Bellagio® design or the crisp lines of the square-paneled Capri™. Every Palazzo door has the weight, feel and richness of solid wood and a smooth surface that is ideal for beautiful finishing. The distinct raised mouldings, and unique high-definition panel profiles make these doors the perfect start to any beautiful room.

Masonite doors are carefully designed to add value, style and beauty, making a house a home that everyone will admire. It is easy to see why Masonite is the BEST IN CLASS for interior doors.



 *Masonite*®

*Masonite. The Beautiful Door.®*





## VOTED Best National Lending Firm

### Wells Fargo Home Mortgage Count On Us To Help Build Your Business

Every day, builders throughout the nation fulfill the role of a trusted expert. Buyers count on you for guidance in building their piece of the American dream. Wells Fargo Home Mortgage shares that mission. No matter the day, or the geographic region, Wells Fargo's home mortgage consultants help buyers become owners. As the #1 lender to buyers of newly constructed homes since 1995,<sup>1</sup> we help more than 100,000 new-construction buyers achieve their goals each year. Plus, as the nation's leading retail mortgage lender,<sup>2</sup> builders and Wells Fargo Home Mortgage consultants are leveraging powerful relationships.

#### The Right Plans, The Right Tools

Wells Fargo offers the nation's largest retail network dedicated to financing new construction homes. Wells Fargo Home Mortgage consultants are located in your communities to work with you and your customers, onsite and on weekends, providing custom-fit financing solutions, smooth and convenient loan processing, quick approvals and closings that happen on time. Wells Fargo's wide range of products, programs and services has the client's needs in mind and the Wells Fargo reputation behind it; a reputation built on the strength of business integrity and market knowledge. Innovative sales and marketing programs, market research information and database management systems help you build a comprehensive business approach to attract and retain customers.



- **Builder Best®** – Offers rate protection for up to two years<sup>3</sup> for all new construction.
- **Spec Lock-in** - Protects your unsold homes against rising interest rates for up to two years, while you advertise for homebuyers.
- **Construction/Perm Advantage<sup>SM</sup>** — Features an interim construction loan paired with a permanent loan. This program offers two financing options to accommodate a changing rate environment.
- **Forward Commitment Option** — Establishes an attractive interest-rate range on selected permanent loans, and guarantees interest rates for up to 24 months at minimal costs.
- **BusinessLine® Line of Credit** — Provides funds for any purpose, such as model home decorating, additional capital, purchasing materials and supplies, or to prepay REALTOR® commissions.

### The Right Relationships

The best business is built on solid relationships. Stuart Tyrie, vice president of Wells Fargo Home Mortgage's National Builder Division, agrees, "Because we listen to what our clients, builders and developers need, we respond with the type of financing options, service solutions and community support that inspire mutually beneficial, long-term relationships. These relationships provide our builders and developers with a competitive advantage and the reason we are consistently ranked a top mortgage brand."



#### National Association of Home Builders

Wells Fargo shares a deep and significant relationship with the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB). Wells Fargo has proudly added their name as title sponsor to the NAHB's Housing Market Index and Housing Opportunity Index. And, Wells Fargo's commitment to NAHB's membership is evident through the homeownership initiatives they promote, the affordable financing options they provide, and the many ways they continually meet the needs of homebuyers. By joining forces and working together, Wells Fargo can turn more of your prospects into buyers and help them build future financial security.



#### Joining Forces

Count on your local Wells Fargo new-construction mortgage specialists to be your **Single Source®** connection with seamless access to a product menu that meets virtually any new-construction financing need and advances the goals of America's home builders and homebuyers. Wells Fargo has the people, products, programs and services to help you sell more homes, more profitably. By joining forces to build business with Wells Fargo, not only can you turn more prospects into buyers and help them build financial security, you can take your business to **The Next Stage®**.

Call 1-800-343-0160 to find a regional builder sales manager and Wells Fargo Home Mortgage consultant in your community. Or visit us at [www.wellsfargo.com/mortgage/articles/build](http://www.wellsfargo.com/mortgage/articles/build).

#### The Great American Homeowner Challenge™

To demonstrate their dedication to building more homeownership opportunities for more people, Wells Fargo Home Mortgage has embarked on a nationwide mission.



As Founding Sponsor, Wells Fargo Home Mortgage has teamed up with #1 bestselling author and financial coach **David Bach** for **The Great American Homeowner Challenge™** with a three-year goal of inspiring 10 million Americans to buy a first home, second home or investment property. To learn more, visit [www.wellsfargo.com/challenge](http://www.wellsfargo.com/challenge)

1. Based on MarkeTrac report. 2. Based on yearend 2005 statistics by Inside Mortgage Finance 2/17/06. 3. May require closing commitment deposit in the amount of 1% of the loan amount.

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# VOTED Best Manufactured Stone



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A rich heritage of leadership and innovation has again earned Owens Corning Cultured Stone® the *Professional Builder* Best In Class award in the manufactured stone category for the second year in a row.

In addition to this top rating, Owens Corning Cultured Stone® leads the industry by meeting the needs of today's builders. They know it takes more than a solid reputation to remain a leader. It takes outstanding service, innovative technology and creative design solutions—all of which Owens Corning Cultured Stone® provides exceptionally well. And because we never compromise on quality, all of our products meet the most stringent codes in the industry.

Committed to innovation, Cultured Stone® recently added Pro-Fit® Alpine LedgeStone, in six contemporary colors. It not only looks good, it was created for simple installation and design flexibility. Innovative colors for Cultured Brick® veneer were also added that complement the existing line of manufactured stone veneer products. And new architectural trim stones like electrical and receptacle box stones and the Monticello® Trim Collection offer a custom-made look and easy installation.

Owens Corning Cultured Stone® has many tools to help builders close the deal when offering Cultured Stone® products to their customers. A web site that is second to none and Exterior FX® design visualization software. This unique software lets customers see Cultured Stone® veneer and other Owens Corning products using the builder's plans to view their options.

New products and colors. Comprehensive design tools. And, once again, the *Professional Builder* Best In Class award. When builders want the best, they turn to The Preferred Name In Stone™ Owens Corning Cultured Stone®.



CULTURED STONE®

The Preferred Name In Stone

For additional information on Owens Corning Cultured Stone® products and services, visit [www.culturedstone.com](http://www.culturedstone.com) or call 1-800-255-1727.

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In a recent study\*, homebuyers said they were 50% more likely to consider buying a home that had a Cultured Stone® exterior. Yes, you read that right. 50% more likely. So if you want your homes to sell more easily, add Cultured Stone® veneer. And that's not just somebody's opinion. It's a fact.



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\*Results from a survey of 1500 home shoppers/home owners conducted by Gilmore Research Group in December 2005. The product colors you see are as accurate as current photography and printing techniques allow. We suggest you look at product samples before you select colors. Printed in U.S.A. October 2006. ©2006 Owens Corning. Cultured Stone® is a registered trademark of Owens Corning.





# VOTED Best Kitchen Faucets

## Moen's Builder Website Provides Innovative Online Tools



Builders looking to save time while working more productively and profitably have new tools at their fingertips with the Moen Builder Website ([builder.moen.com](http://builder.moen.com)). This innovative online resource offers interactive tools, features and product information designed specifically with the needs of builders in mind.

From online product training and market research, to tips on design and effective merchandising, builders can find everything they need with the click of a button.

### Sell Sheet Creator

Moen's Sell Sheet Creator allows you to design professional-quality, customized sell sheets highlighting the styles and finishes of Moen products you offer. The look of the sell sheets can be individualized with your company logo and pricing.

### Online Showroom

Homeowners today often look online for inspiration and information for their home buying purchase decisions.

With that in mind, the Online Showroom is the ideal way to provide your homebuyers with a tool to view all of the faucet choices available to personalize their new home. They can even make their faucets selections at home and e-mail them back to you...saving time during their selection meeting.

### Product Reference Center

The Product Reference Center provides you with information and selling points of all the faucets, sinks, showering products and bath accessories available from Moen, ShowHouse by Moen and Creative Specialties International.

### Customizable Event Invitations

Whether you are hosting an open house or a realtor preview, Moen's Builder Website has simplified the process of creating invitations. Simply select a color palette, add house information and within minutes, you can design a printer-ready invitation.

### Additional Builder Support

Moen's Builder Website also features design and merchandising tips, market research, online catalog ordering, notifications of new products or product deletions, targeted trade support and quick links to [moen.com](http://moen.com).

Why work harder when you can work smarter? Start saving steps and increase your productivity and profitability by logging on to [builder.moen.com](http://builder.moen.com) today.



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## PATH REPORT

# Strong, Silent Types

Alternative construction technologies gain momentum over popular standbys.

**Builders can tackle problems** with skilled labor and climbing energy bills at the same time by considering using insulating concrete forms (ICFs) or structural insulated panels (SIPs) in their next project.

ICFs and SIPs allow more durable homes to go up easier; require less skilled labor and less time on site; and provide homeowners with excellent comfort and lower energy bills.

## Behind the walls

To understand how ICFs and SIPs work, it's best to understand what they are.

ICFs use permanent, rigid foam forms for exterior poured concrete walls and foundations. After the concrete is poured, the forms remain in place as the home's thermal insulation.

SIPs are made from a thick layer of foam sandwiched between two pieces of oriented strand board, plywood or fiber cement. They are manufactured and cut to spec at a factory and delivered to the construction site.

Both ICFs and SIPs construction rely on careful planning and design prior to delivery and site assembly, although neither requires more advanced planning than the other.

Many traditional stick-frame builders have successfully adopted both technologies and have watched business prosper because of it.

## ICFs

For Ann Crocker and Ross Rains of Energy Smart Solutions of Flower Mound, Texas, the desire to build higher quality homes gives them an edge over the competition and motivated the

duo to use ICFs.

Crocker and Rains recently used ICFs in a 13,300-square-foot house in Forney, Texas, to form the main structure of the home. Rains and Crocker estimate that a home built with ICFs will save its owner between 60 and 70 percent in energy costs compared to a conventional wood-framed house.

ICF material costs typically range from about \$1.75 per square foot to about \$3.50 per square foot.

## SIPs

SIPs make it possible for houses to be placed under roof within days rather than weeks. Although basic carpentry skills are required, assemblers do not need the skill levels of conventional framing crews, which can reduce costs to builders.

Although SIPs may require a higher upfront investment and more planning than traditional building methods, the long-term energy savings for homeowners is a very attractive selling point, winning over builders such as Scott Bergford, founder and president of Scott Homes in Olympia, Wash.

"We have quadrupled sales since



**STRONG AND EFFICIENT SIPs** designed for below-grade use can be installed by the same crew that will complete the structure.

adopting SIPs," says Bergford. "Besides the energy efficiency and the comfort, we get significant interest from people wanting a green home. They seek us out — especially those with respiratory issues or chemical sensitivities."

## Alternative Applications

Although both ICFs and SIPs offer plenty of advantages in their basic applications, some builders have chosen to take the technologies a step further.

### Vertical ICFs

Deborah Arrington of Deb's Construction in Manakin Sabot, Va., was looking for an efficient alternative to stick-frame building. She found it in vertical ICFs.

Arrington first used vertical ICFs on her own home, a one-story 5,500-square-foot house. She had little trouble mastering the new material and now uses them on all her projects.



### SIPs Underground

Curtis Stendel, president of Panelworks Plus in St. Francis, Minn., has been building with SIPs for more than 20

years. A recent project introduced him to a new way of using the technology.

His client, a fellow builder, wanted a well-insulated basement for his vaca-

tion cabin, which is located on a small island. Although SIPs are normally used to build the exterior walls of a home, Stendel discovered that using them on the home's foundation meant he could deliver the comfort his client desired.

"The key to below-grade panels is that every four feet — at every panel joint — there is a 5-ply, 2 by 4 treated glulam," says Stendel. "That is basically your stud, which serves as a beam supporting the dirt force against the outside. You stand it vertically to carry a load, just like it would horizontally."

The panels sit on a base of washed rock which is the drainage plain. The panels are sealed with panel sealant and expandable foam, then fastened with stainless steel fasteners. Panel seal tape covers the exterior panel joints, and the entire exterior is wrapped with two layers of black 6-mil poly. The foundation is backfilled after the panels are sealed.

The payoff for Stendel? The structure was faster to build, and the basement is warm enough to use as a living room. And in mastering an unusual application of the technology, Stendel has created a niche for himself that sets him apart from other builders.

"Rising energy costs are having a major influence on consumers' choices when it comes to new home construction," says Stendel. "Educated buyers are becoming increasingly aware of green building methods and the impact that building green has on the environment. The green advantages of building with SIPs are definitely increasing our customer base."

Kate Fried and Scott Shepherd write about better building practices on behalf of the Partnership for Advancing Technology in Housing (PATH). PATH is administered by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Learn more at [www.pathnet.org](http://www.pathnet.org).

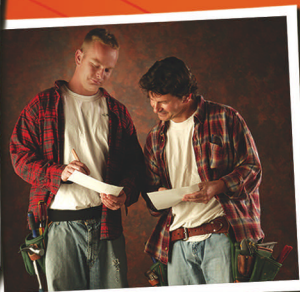
## Tired of losing money on every payroll?

**EMPLOYEE TIMESHEET**

NAME: Bill Kemp DATES: 11-15

DAY	START	LUNCH	END	JOBSITE	WORK DONE	HOURS
MON	7:00	1/2	3:30	Brentw.		8
TUE			3:30			8
WED			4:00	↓		8 1/2
THU			4:00	Crestv.		8 1/2
FRI	↓	↓	4:00	↓		8 1/2

Employee Signature: Bill Kemp TOTAL HOURS: 41 1/2



**Reality?**

### Employee Report

**Kemp, Bill**

Date Range: 12/11/2006 through 12/15/2006

Day	Date	Jobsite	Start	Stop	Cost Code	Hours	Total
Mon	12/11	Brentwood	7:08 AM	12:05 PM	Framing	4:57	
			12:41 PM	3:22 PM	Framing	2:41	7:38 hours
Tue	12/12	Brentwood	7:12 AM	12:07 PM	Framing	4:55	
			12:43 PM	3:23 PM	Framing	2:40	7:35 hours
Wed	12/13	Brentwood	7:12 AM	12:02 PM	Framing	4:50	
			12:46 PM	3:49 PM	Framing	3:03	7:53 hours
Thu	12/14	Crestview	7:17 AM	12:19 PM	Drywall	5:02	
			12:50 PM	3:46 PM	Drywall	2:56	7:58 hours
Fri	12/15	Crestview	7:13 AM	12:07 PM	Drywall	4:54	
			12:44 PM	3:39 PM	Drywall	2:55	7:49 hours

Signature: Bill Kemp Kemp, Bill

Total **38:53 hours**

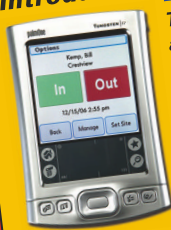


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## Ray Tonjes Builder Inc.

### ▼ TruStile Interior doors

[www.trustile.com](http://www.trustile.com)

All TruStile panel doors come in paint-grade MDF, 12 different finishes as well as any TruClad metal finishes. Buyers choose styles from the TS Series, Tambour Series, V-Groove Series or Custom Design Series, and the doors will be built in the materials and panel profiles specified.

Circle # 125 or go to <http://pb.ims.ca/5215-125>



### In My Own Words

*"TruStile doors are quality — they are simply constructed better. They have multiple styles available that we don't see in competing products, and that is probably the biggest advantage. The performance is just great."*



**Ray Tonjes**  
President  
Austin, Texas

### ▼ Mulch Filter Sock

[www.jvdirt.com](http://www.jvdirt.com)

J-V Dirt and Loam fill various types of netting with recycled wood mulch to create a storm water sediment filter. These devices, known as mulch filter socks, filter tubes and mulch logs, remove particles of less than 25 microns. They do not need to be trenched and are easily maintained. When construction is complete, the netting can be cut and removed, and the mulch used to amend the soil.

Circle # 126 or go to <http://pb.ims.ca/5215-126>

### In My Own Words

*"The product is a 12-inch diameter mesh bag filled with compost that replaces conventional storm water filtering systems. It is less hazardous on the job site with no metal stakes and doesn't get beat up. When the job is done, you just split the nylon mesh and leave the compost on site, so it becomes part of your landscaping."*





>> Ray Tonjes Builder Inc. cont'd▼ **Cocoon Cellulose Insulation****www.cocooninsulation.com**

Cocoon cellulose insulation from U.S. GreenFiber delivers permanent, high-efficiency thermal insulation and an effective R-value with for added safety. Made from at least 80 percent recycled paper fiber, Cocoon reduces nuisance noise when used in walls.

**Circle # 127 or go to <http://pb.ims.ca/5215-127>**

**In My Own Words**

*"Cocoon cellulose insulation is a blown-in insulation made of recycled newsprint. As a green builder, I use a lot of recycled materials when I can, and this product offers every advantage — a name brand that is also cost-effective. One of the benefits Cocoon delivers over fiberglass insulation is sound deadening, and there are some residual mold inhibitors in it, too."*

▲ **ZipLevel Pro 2000****www.ziplevel.com**

ZipLevel Pro 2000 by Technidea is a precision altimeter and a revolutionary alternative to rotary lasers. ZipLevel levels and reads elevations directly in digits — no math, rods, tripods, line-of-sight error with distance or factory calibration.

**Circle # 128 or go to <http://pb.ims.ca/5215-128>**

**In My Own Words**

*"The ZipLevel permits true, one-man operation and allows elevations to be taken literally 30 seconds after arriving at the site. A digital water level that provides very accurate elevations, it allows me to check grades, elevations and heights by myself. Lightweight and easily portable, it consists of two main parts: a base unit and measurement module that's very accurate."*

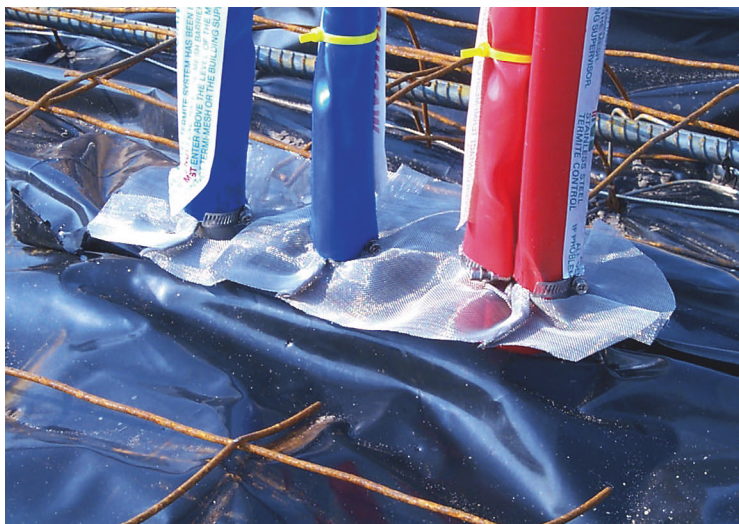
▶ **Termimesh****www.termi-mesh.com**

Termimesh System is an environmentally friendly termite barrier that provides effective and permanent termite protection without spraying chemicals. Termimesh uses marine-grade stainless steel mesh, which promises to last the life of the building.

**Circle # 129 or go to <http://pb.ims.ca/5215-129>**

**In My Own Words**

*"We've been using Termimesh for five years. The combination of the product, the supplier and the installer makes this product as good as it gets. The physical barrier of stainless steel mesh surrounds all your plumbing penetrations as well as any penetrations in your slab."*







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1

2

This is where we control the home's electrical distribution.

3

This is where you'll find the remote that controls the entire home.

4

This is Helen. She's having a nice hot cup of coffee — thanks to us.

GETTY IMAGES



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# Home Technology



## Escient

The Fireball from Escient is a digital music server that is available in 100, 200 and 400 GB hard drives. The controller can be linked with home audio systems via an Ethernet or wireless router. Optional MP-150 modules can be installed in other zones. The unit itself has a CD burner/ripper and gapless audio playback, and it can record any analog or digital audio signal.

Circle 134 or go to <http://pb.ims.ca/5215-134>

## Ditek

The HD2 120/240 volt single-phase whole-house surge protection from Ditek filters out electromagnetic and radio interference. This device is hard-wired to a 120/240 volt power panel that handles up to 125,000 amps and carries a UL 1449 rating. LED indicator light for each phase on the front of the unit confirms protection. It is encased in a watertight 4-inch by 4-inch by 2-1/4-inch plastic box. A wiring harness is included and an optional flush mount is available.

Circle 130 or go to <http://pb.ims.ca/5215-130>



## On-Q

The LyriQ multi-source audio system from On-Q/LeGrand includes a four-source, eight-zone distribution module and triple-source input based on Cat-5 technology. The Cat-5 cable transmits audio, power and infrared data between the distribution module and the individual keypad controls, and any one keypad can control audio levels via a universal remote. Two-way protocols facilitate internal and external command transmissions.

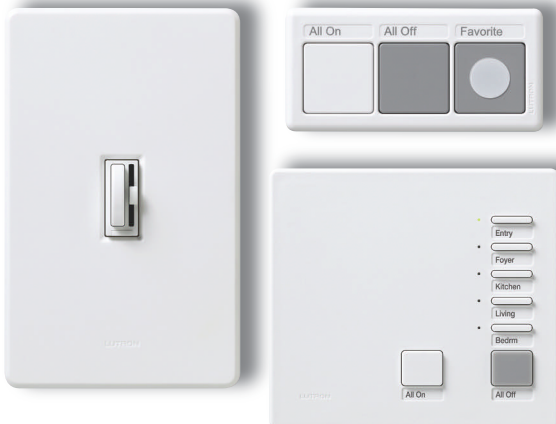
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## Lutron

The Aurora wireless radio frequency (RF) lighting system from Lutron is available in a kit for builders that includes five dimmers, one master control, one wireless controller and one central antenna. Each master control button handles a single dimmer. The system can be expanded to include up to nine wireless controllers, or two systems can be bridged together. Packages come in white, ivory, almond and light almond.

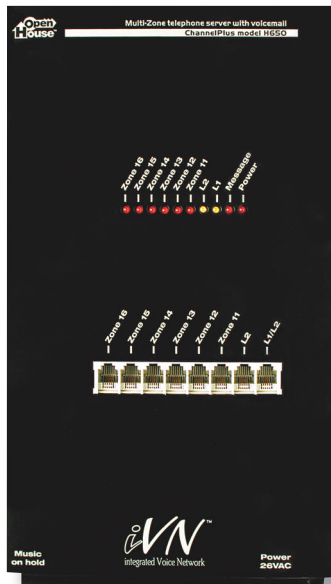
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## Open House

The Model H650 Integrated Voice Network from Open House is a multi-zone telephone system that offers a wide variety of features. The Model H650 works with existing phones and supports six zones. The H650 allows 30 minutes of voice mail record time, optional music on hold and a zone-to-zone intercom. The auto attendant feature can answer incoming calls and by adding a custom outgoing message, consumers can route calls to different zones.

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## Product Review

>> HOME TECHNOLOGY



### Exceptional Innovation

The LifePoint high-definition touch control panel from Exceptional Innovation controls lighting systems, thermostats, security and audio with the company's LifeWare software. The software can handle four different streams simultaneously through Cat-5 or Cat-6 cable with no analog switches involved. The system integrates with Microsoft's Windows XP Media center and ships pre-loaded with all necessary software; installers have access to two USB ports to attach a peripheral mouse or keyboard.

Circle 135 or go to <http://pb.ims.ca/5215-135>

### B&K Components

The CK 1.2 keypad from B&K Components controls up to 20 devices with 40 nameable keys for each. RJ45 and terminal block connections on the back panel allow easy hook-ups and daisy-chaining. It features standard dual gang installation and a removable front faceplate for programming access. A sensor on the front panel allows IR pass-through from local remotes. Faceplates are available in white or ivory and can be painted on-site.

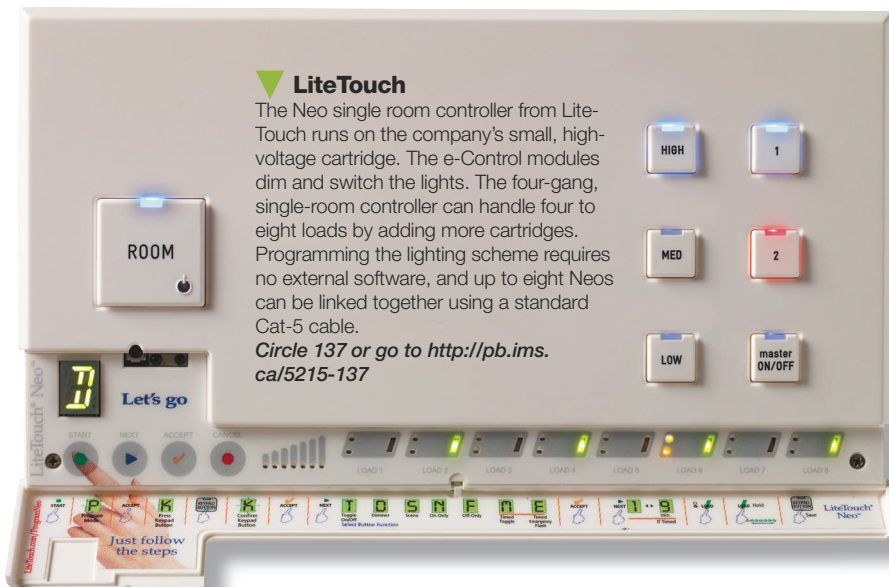
Circle 136 or go to <http://pb.ims.ca/5215-136>



### LiteTouch

The Neo single room controller from LiteTouch runs on the company's small, high-voltage cartridge. The e-Control modules dim and switch the lights. The four-gang, single-room controller can handle four to eight loads by adding more cartridges. Programming the lighting scheme requires no external software, and up to eight Neos can be linked together using a standard Cat-5 cable.

Circle 137 or go to <http://pb.ims.ca/5215-137>





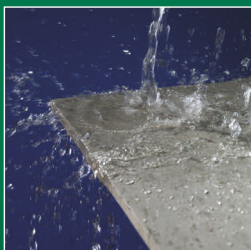


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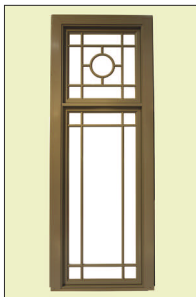


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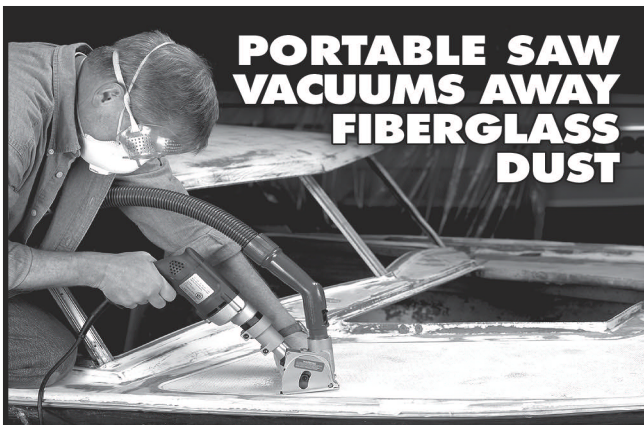
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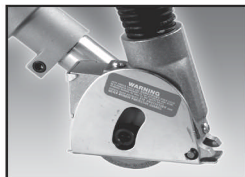
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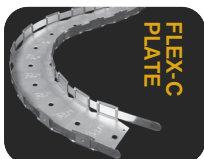
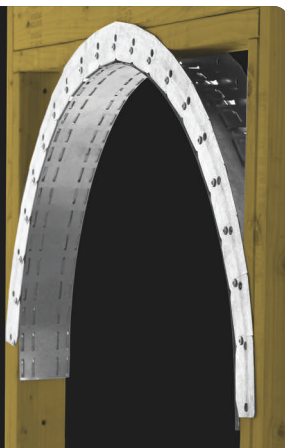
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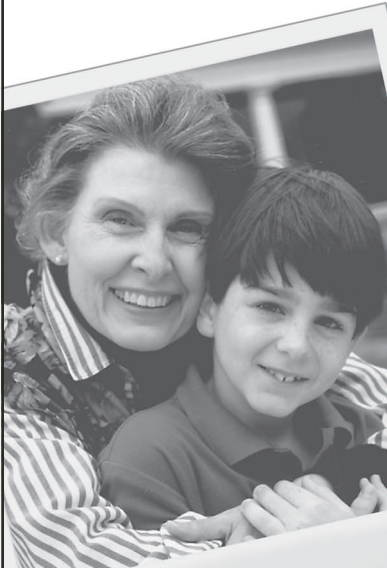
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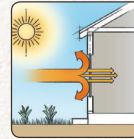
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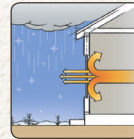




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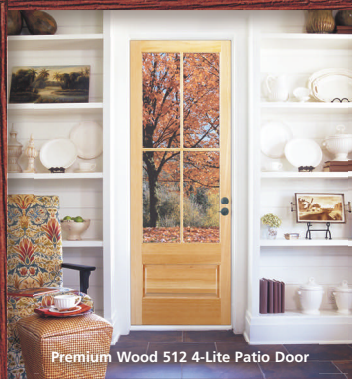


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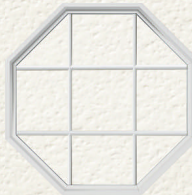
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