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staff

Editorial Director

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

Creative Director

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

Assistant Managing Editor

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

Senior Editors

Susan Bady 630/288-8194
susan.bady@reedbusiness.com

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

Products Editor

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

Contributing Editors

John Rymer, Paul Cardis

Senior Contributing Editor

Ann Matesi

BUSINESS STAFF

General Manager, Construction Media

Dean Horowitz 630/288-8180
dhorowitz@reedbusiness.com

Group Director —Sales & Business Development

Tony Mancini 610/205-1180
armancini@reedbusiness.com

Director of Events

Judy Brociek 630/288-8184
jbrociek@reedbusiness.com

Custom Project Manager

Emily Yarina 630/288-8109
emily.yarina@reedbusiness.com

Director of Finance

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

Audience Marketing Manager

Angela Tanner 800/446-6551
subsmail@reedbusiness.com

MAIN OFFICE

Professional Builder

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

Reed Business Information

John Poulin, CEO/CFO, RBI-US
Jeff DeBalko, President, RBI-US

Vice President Interactive Media & Sales Management

Karthik Krishnan 646-746-7580
Karthik.krishnan@reedbusiness.com

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Online-Exclusive Reports

Read online-exclusive reports by our correspondents and industry experts. A sample:

Contract Cancellations Start to Fade

Contributing Editor Pat Curry investigates the cancellation rates builders are experiencing and finds that the number of cancellations is starting to normalize.

Integrating Quality and Green Building

Building green shouldn't be done on a whim. Management and building consultants Serge Ogranovich and Denis Leonard outline processes you should note.

Under the Radar: Military Housing

There's one building segment having success: military housing. Read about Actus Lend Lease's experience in making it work.

Webcast Registration: 'Legally Green'

Register for our Webcast, "Legally Green: Deliver the Green You Promise," which we'll tap the industry knowledge of a green builder and construction attorney. While you're there, you can replay our Webcasts from the past. Go to www.HousingZone.com/webcasts.

Industry Press Release

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Nick Bajzek, our products guy, picks a product you should know five days a week. You get a picture, you get info and you get a starting point for your next buying decision. (And while you're on the site, click into Nick's blog, The Product Guy, for more product goodness.)



contact us

Editorial Submissions letters to the editor

Send to Paul Deffenbaugh
2000 Clearwater Drive, Oak Brook, Ill. 60523 or
paul.deffenbaugh@reedbusiness.com

products

Submit text and high-resolution images to
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Applied Improvement

Just applying for the National Housing Quality Awards can help your company identify processes for improvement.

A friend of mine recently said, “Just applying for the National Housing Quality Awards was the best thing I’ve done for my company. It forced me to answer questions I hadn’t even thought about yet.”

This month, we celebrate the accomplishments of two companies that answered the questions and proved to visiting judges that the answers were accurate. Simonini Builders of Charlotte, N.C., and Wayne Homes in Uniontown, Ohio, have established continual improvement cultures that helped these companies survive. Wayne Homes is an entry-level, on-your-lot builder and Simonini Builders is a custom, semi-custom and neighborhood builder that serves the top 4 percent in household income. Both operate on the same philosophy of quality. The result? Success.

The NHQ Awards measures builders in eight areas.

Leadership: Owners establish a vision and mission for the company that is communicated clearly and efficiently. In top companies, all employees and trades know the vision and mission and are able to make decisions independently to support those goals.

Strategic Planning: Home builders tend to react to the market rather than identify opportunities and develop resources for the company to achieve new goals. The best companies create strategic plans that are reviewed regularly and against which progress is measured and accountability held.

Performance Management: The best companies measure their performance in every area, from finances to quality control. Then, they evaluate that performance and institute changes to improve performance.

Customer Satisfaction: Customer satisfaction has to be part of the culture that is enforced throughout the organization, and is essential to success. In the NHQ Awards, you can score perfectly in every category, but bomb this one and you won’t win anything.

Human Resources: The best companies have the best people. One Simonini employee was livid that the judges did not select her to interview or hear her testimony. Her

description of how the company treated her during a difficult life experience is the kind of story that shows the value a quality company can bring to individual lives.

Construction Quality: Many companies claim they build great houses. NHQ Award winners have the measurements to prove they build great houses.

Trade Relationships: Trades are essential to a company’s success. The best companies partner with their trades and ask for feedback on how they are doing.

Business Results: If you do everything, business results will take care of themselves.

Simonini Builders and Wayne Homes
win NHQ Awards.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul Deffenbaugh".

Paul Deffenbaugh, Editorial Director
paul.deffenbaugh@reedbusiness.com



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KEVORK S. HOVNANIAN

1923–2009

Kevork Hovnanian arrived in the United States without a penny, fleeing political aggression in Armenia. With his three brothers, he built one of the country's largest and most vital home building companies. Hovnanian passed away Sept. 24. The industry will miss his vision and leadership.

Read more on Kevork S. Hovnanian's accomplishments at www.HousingZone.com/PB

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PHOTO: K. HOVNANIAN ENTERPRISES

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[CUSTOMER SATISFACTION]

Survey Influence Is Back



Why too much 'survey influence' can hurt your customer satisfaction scores

By Paul Cardis, Avid Ratings

Once again the major research powerhouse releases its home builder rankings. In fact, for the past 13 years, rankings of builders' customer satisfaction have been made public in most of the major markets throughout the U.S. and Canada. At the center of everyone's questioning is whether a builder can cajole customers into giving a high ranking. We found that attempts to influence homeowners into giving a positive response have little impact on raising scores.

However, some companies put so much emphasis on surveys that customers feel coerced into providing a false high rating. It's not un-

positive survey results.

Perhaps it's a necessary practice that we self-promote for high scores with our customers and even campaign for better ratings. Politicians often go door to door to get out the vote, so what's wrong with businesses campaigning for top ratings? At first this sounded reasonable to me. However, a client experience gave me doubt.

The president of a major home-building company called me up one day and said, "Paul, I think you have a major problem in your survey. Our scores in every category are near the best in the country. We have no major low spots in our data.

stopped campaigning, their scores improved.

The research

Our data over eight years clearly indicates two zones of performance: survey awareness and survey influence.

Some "survey talk" has a positive effect. But how much is too much? Imagine a graph that charts the intensity of survey talk with buyers' favorable ratings. As survey talk increases, ratings begin to improve. But at some point, ratings fall. The area between these two points is what we call the Zone of Awareness, and this is where every builder wants to be. To be outside this zone means you're in the Zone of Influence, and that is not good. Scores in this area are lower than if you didn't say anything at all!

We live in a heightened customer satisfaction world that encourages this kind of employee behavior. Stay vigilant with your team to make sure it doesn't negatively affect your results. **PB**

Paul Cardis is CEO of Avid Ratings, a research and consulting firm specializing in customer satisfaction for the home-building industry. You can reach him at paul.cardis@avidratings.com.

Cardis' Tips

PROHIBIT SURVEY INFLUENCE

Every builder should institute a policy and educate its staff to eliminate any type of coercive messages regarding customer satisfaction scores.

CONDUCT SURVEY AWARENESS

It is appropriate to make buyers aware a survey is coming. The proper message should be "our company does conduct customer satisfaction surveys, and we would appreciate it if could fill it out openly and honestly."

FOCUS ON CARING

The most significant predictor of recommendation levels is the amount of caring a customer receives from staff. It is better to ask a customer "How are things going?" versus "Did you fill out our survey?"

Attempts to influence a positive response have little impact on raising scores.

common for an employee to instruct the buyer, "If there's any reason you can't give us all 10's, let me know before filling it out so that we can make things better." Some are so bold as to mention how their bonus or other incentive depends on high marks. This is what we call survey influence, an attempt to coerce customers into giving false

And, yet, our 'recommend to friend' scores are stuck at the 89 percent level." Then he said, "We even go door to door and tell them how to fill the darn thing out."

It was at that moment that I discovered why he was hitting a glass ceiling: his team was campaigning for positive responses, but it actually hurt their scores. When they



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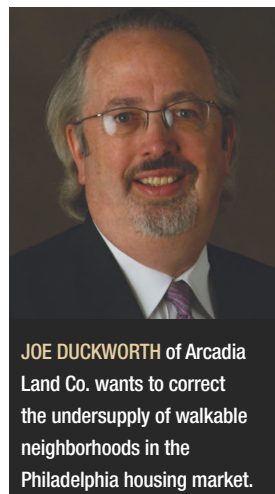
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[BUILDER OF THE YEAR UPDATE]

5 Minutes with Joe Duckworth

Joe Duckworth was named *Professional Builder's* Builder of the Year in 1992, when he was CEO of Realen Homes, a Philadelphia-area builder. Now he's a partner in Arcadia Land Co. in Haverford, Pa. Duckworth's son, Jason, is president of Arcadia.

By Susan Bady, Senior Editor, Design



JOE DUCKWORTH of Arcadia Land Co. wants to correct the undersupply of walkable neighborhoods in the Philadelphia housing market.

Professional Builder: When and why did you step down as CEO of Realen?

Joe Duckworth: I got bored with another opening of another project and operating a home-building company. I decided that I much preferred the higher risk-reward, creative side of land development. So in 1998, I set up Arcadia Land Co. with Robert [Davis] and Chris [Leinberger], who had been on my board at Realen.

PB: What does Arcadia bring to the housing market?

Duckworth: We're a small niche company that currently has a couple of traditional neighborhood developments under construction. TNDs are undersupplied in the Philadelphia market. Our projects perform better

than conventional [developments] because they're differentiated, and differentiated well.

PB: What is most rewarding?

Duckworth: I love working with Jason every day and watching him learn and grow. And Robert and Chris are not only my partners but have also become my dear friends.

PB: How has your life changed since you left Realen?

Duckworth: It's much more balanced. I take a fair bit of time off; I've been on five not-for-profit boards in the Philadelphia area in the last few years and continue to serve on a couple of them; and I've maintained an active leadership role in the development/building business, without it being a consuming passion as it was for me earlier in life.

Tips for: Trade Councils

You've set up a new trade council, but will it survive? Hal Peller has set up dozens with True North and says a start-up council has a 60 percent fail rate in the first year. Here's advice to keep yours going. (Read more and see other articles about trade councils at www.HousingZone.com/PB.)

Keep the non-builder facilitator

Consultants and builders recommend that the builder not run the meeting, and it should stay that way.

Identify problems

Get buy-in and keep everyone focused by encouraging members to talk about problems — and assign teams to solve them, says Peller. If they need extra motivation, says Jeff Meyer, who has organized multiple trade councils with large national production builders, underscore the major benefit: to save everyone money.

Recognize and reward

Congratulate trade partners for jobs well done. "You can recognize three trades that did an exceptional job," says Construction Manager Richard Ratliff of Drees Homes' Maryland Division. "Everyone likes to be rewarded."

— Sara Zailskas, Assistant Managing Editor

Lumber Prices Stay Stable

Home builders can expect lumber prices to remain fairly stable for 2009, and they're now at levels about one-third lower than they were at the height of the housing boom, according to reports from Random Lengths. The Random Lengths Framing Lumber Composite Price has been hovering in the \$230 to \$240 range (per thousand board feet) since mid-June, which reflects a 15 percent increase since the low point earlier this year. But it's still down from prices a year ago. Reed Construction Data Chief Economist James Haughey says that a "slow but steady rise is expected in 2010 when construction spending is again expanding." — Mark Jarasek, Senior Editor, Electronic Media

Unified

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When times are tough — and no one has been immune to our economy's downfall — it's easy to forgo routines and strategy critical to business success. But the two winners of the 2010 National Housing Quality Award, Simonini Builders and Wayne Homes, maintained their business rhythm and devotion to employees as the challenges mounted.

A shining example of this discipline is our gold winner, Simonini Builders, which excelled in nearly all eight NHQ categories. The company's solid communication among managers and employees coupled with business transparency demonstrate a standard of home-building excellence the industry should note.

Communication rhythm

Simonini's leadership team operates transparently; everything from finances to sales is discussed openly. They've established a meeting rhythm of daily, weekly and monthly meetings to update each other while addressing priorities and how they align with goals. It is the daily huddles, though, that allow the company to achieve progress on its goals. The meeting strategy allows them to react quickly to changing business conditions, says President and CFO Bill Saint.

"It's much better to have multiple heads looking for solutions and to get fresh ideas," says Saint. "Through open communication in strategic channels, we're able to keep everyone informed much more fluently and react."

Front

Exceptional processes, company culture and communication keep the 2010 National Housing Award Winners — Simonini Builders and Wayne Homes — strong amid an economic downturn.

By Sara Zailskas,
Assistant Managing Editor

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Company, personal development interlinked

Simonini Builders is a semi-custom, custom and neighborhood builder with a renovations division. You can find Simonini Builders' long-term strategic plan in a thick, three-ring binder that's revised every year. But you don't have to crack it open to know the vision or the company's short-term goals. Co-owners Alan Simonini and Ray Killian Jr. and Saint want it that way. Meetings help with communication, but executing that strategy mainly takes place through a personal goal-setting system adapted from Verne Harnish's book "Mastering the Rockefeller Habits."

A GOLDEN WIN.
Simonini Builders leadership lead the company to NHQ gold. Pictured left to right: President and CFO Bill Saint; Co-Owner and Chief Creative Officer Alan Simonini; and Co-Owner and CEO Ray Killian Jr.

Photo: Jason Miczek/Getty images

COMMUNICATION IS GOLDEN among Simonini managers. A regular meeting rhythm focuses the team on strategic goals, which keeps company priorities straight, says CEO and Co-Owner Ray Killian Jr.



Company Profile

*Simonini Builders
Charlotte, N.C.
Founded 1973; Alan
Simoni and Ray Killian
took ownership in 1994.
Semi-custom, custom and
neighborhood builder
2008 closings: 56
2009 closing goal: 40*

Each quarter, the trio picks 4-5 goals called “Rocks” tied to Simonini Builders’ success and becomes individually responsible for them. That list of goals is shared with all employees, and everyone right on down to the secretary establishes personal Rocks that directly contribute to those of the company’s leadership. The result is an uber-focused support system tailored to priorities. You can have an employee who might want to redesign a spreadsheet, for example, but if the task saves time but doesn’t contribute to what needs to be done now, it can’t be a Rock.

“When you have a group of individuals that is self-motivated, self-managed and entrepreneurial, as our employees are, it’s critically important to focus and communicate the strategic plan,” Killian says. “That way we all have a direction and we’re focused on moving forward.”

And every decision ties back to Rocks.

“It’s all about focusing people in on solutions,” Killian says. “We’ve found that when we have a group of people listening to a challenge, you’re not alone in those challenges. And it’s an opportunity to communicate top-down what’s going on in the company.

“We have thousands of things to do,” Killian adds, “but if you don’t isolate your priorities, then you don’t get anything accomplished.”

Of course, underneath all Rocks is the goal to be financially successful. Rather than assume employees understand the numbers, the company trains them, starting with the book “The Great Game of Business” by Jack Stack. One employee spoke to the judges about the pride in knowing how to read a financial report.

Says Saint: “Financial literacy makes communication much easier if everyone is up to speed and on the same page.”

Employees, trades as partners

Talk to Ray Killian Jr. about his company’s successes and he’ll inevitably credit his employees.

“When Alan and I went into business together,” says Killian, “we knew the only way to succeed would be to hire the brightest and most creative people and give them an en-

vironment to excel in.”

But his enthusiasm goes beyond an appreciation for their hard work. He earnestly describes the Simonini hiring process that has allowed them to hand-pick their staff. A formulated system helps them evaluate, underwrite and hire candidates whose interests, skills and desires align with the job position and company culture.

The process is serious business: it usually spans 4-5 hours, and there’s a component that tests spatial skills because, the three explain, if you can’t grasp basic home-building concepts such as floor plans, you’re not going to do well.

The company culture for success extends to its trade contractors as well. Many are second- or third-generation partners, and the trades the NHQ judges spoke to talked of pride in wearing Simonini shirts because of the company’s regional reputation and standards. It’s a high standard to meet, but one with payoffs. One trade partner said, “If I have a new guy, I’ll put him on a Simonini job. If he can’t handle it, then I know he won’t work out.”

About a year ago, Simonini Builders established a trade council, and as the trades get settle into their own rhythm, they testify it’s already helped everyone’s bottom line.

Catering to the customer

You wouldn’t walk into the Ritz-Carlton and not find soap at the sink or garbage bags in the bins, so why wouldn’t you in a Simonini Home that just became yours?

Alan Simonini is obsessed with details. His employees will tell you that as he walks through his homes (each Simonini home has Alan’s approval) he checks all screws in the wall plates (Are the grooves pointed up?) and touches the walls to check the paint (Is it as smooth as paper?). He watches to make sure each shutter closes properly because everything must function. Simonini homes, he says, should be nothing less in quality than you’d expect from Mercedes-Benz, Montblanc or any other luxury brand.

“I hate to see things not 100 percent,” Simonini says. “Home builders have to have the last product in America that is not being delivered defect-free. No warranty (callbacks) is

the goal of every (Simonini) home.”

The key here isn't just the obsession with quality but also understanding buyers. Simonini clients represent the top 4 percent of the market — business owners, doctors, lawyers, Nascar professionals and the like. They're used to luxury.

The company also discovered its buyers are willing to give up a million-dollar home for a \$600,000 home, and they're wanting it to be smaller, too. Data and observations pushed the builder to redesign floor-plans and begin offering product starting in the upper \$400,000s (Simonini's average home is around \$1 million).

Whether the home is \$500,000 or over \$3 million, the home-buying process and construction quality is the same. The same transparency and communication takes place with clients, who seem to be

responding well: 29 percent of buyers were referred by an owner of a Simonini home, and Simonini's independent customer satisfaction score for NHQ comes in at 96 percent.

Learning from the best

The Simonini team are students of other industries, beginning with Alan. He's embraced the Ritz-Carlton approach, even handing out wallet cards with the Simonini mission, vision and values to employees. It's an approach Killian and Saint match to stay on top of the industry.

“I think it's about having an open mind and constantly wanting to learn,” says Saint. “It's listening to a lot of people and having a world view, then connecting the dots to the market, and then to the [industry] and then to the company.”

NHQ IN-DEPTH

Head online to www.HousingZone.com/PB to hear from Alan Simonini, Ray Killian Jr. and Bill Saint about the philosophy behind Simonini's processes, and then listen to judges' impressions.

HOW DO YOU MATCH UP?

Take our online NHQ assessment tool at www.HousingZone.com/nhq.

A POSITIVE TEAM

Wayne Homes management, led by owners Bill Post and Dave Logsdon (front center), have created a company culture that recognizes employees won't treat customers any better than a company treats its employees.



Photo: Roger Mastroiani/Getty Images

Happy Employees for Happy Clients

For Wayne Homes, satisfying customers starts with satisfied employees.

By Jonathan Sweet, Senior Editor

It's often said that you can't expect your employees to treat your customers any better than you treat them. That's a lesson that Wayne Homes has taken to heart.

With an emphasis on communication and putting the right people in place, the Ohio-based on-your-lot builder has improved company culture and customer experiences. That focus on human resources and the leadership that inspires it has earned the company a Silver Award in the 2010 National

Housing Quality Awards.

It'd be easy for the Wayne Homes employees to get discouraged. The company builds homes in the hard-hit industrial heartland of Ohio and Western Pennsylvania. Plus, Wayne Homes has been through two ownership changes in a decade, merging with Centex in 1998 and becoming independent again at the end of 2007 when long-time Wayne Homes veterans Dave Logsdon and Bill Post took over the company.

FOCUS ON IMPROVEMENT

ONE OF THE KEY WAYS WAYNE HOMES IMPROVES QUALITY is through a process called Opportunities for Improvement, or OFIs, a process adapted from David Weekley Homes. Employees can submit suggestions for how the company can improve operations or add value to the homeowner experience ranging from the small to major changes such as how the company staffs its after-hours call line.

OFIs are evaluated in weekly meetings that don't include senior management. After the suggestions are researched, the committee has the power to implement them or not. About 400 to 500 OFIs are suggested a year and about 80 percent of them are implemented, saving Wayne Homes thousands of dollars and improving the customer experience, according to the company.

"Something like this exists in most good companies, but the trick is that they are disciplined enough to consistently use it," one judge said.

Instead, in interviews with randomly selected employees, the judges were impressed with how loyal and optimistic the employees were and how they've embraced the company's mission and vision.

"The employees buy into the culture," said one judge. That comes from a leadership that communicates openly and frequently with their employees, the judges added.

Company leadership gets the message out through a series of regular meetings ranging from one-on-ones to department meetings to company-wide town halls. Every employee meets for a half-hour on a weekly or biweekly basis with their manager to go over personal goals and growth opportunities, and employees receive "Growth Reviews" every six months.

The communication is not just one-way, either. Management regularly solicits employee feedback through the regular reviews, employee surveys, suggestion boxes and Opportunity for Improvement (or OFI) forms (see sidebar).

"They truly have the best interests of not just the corporation in mind, but the interests of those people who are helping build the corporation," said one judge.

Wayne Homes uses a rigorous hiring process to make sure it gets the right people in place. When the company makes a hiring

decision, it's about whether they'll be a good fit rather than if they have a lot of experience. Noted one employee: "They're looking for good people — they'll find you a position."

After the initial interview, applicants take a personality profile screening created by The Berke Group to measure their compatibility with the characteristics needed to succeed in a given role.

After a second interview, where managers use the information developed from the Berke profile to guide questions, potential employees go through a final "Retention Interview." The hiring manager meets with the applicant and his or her spouse or significant other at the prospect's home, setting the expectations for the workload and answering any questions the partner may have.

Once they start, employees attend initial training and orientation at the home office and meet the company management and principals before starting at one of eight

Company Profile

Wayne Homes

Uniontown, Ohio

Founded in 1973

On-your-lot builder on scattered sites throughout Ohio and Western Pennsylvania.

2008 closings: 424

2009 closing goal: 250

Tagline: "For all the Right Reasons"

local sales offices or five construction offices. On the first day, every employee also receives two books: "Raving Fans" by Ken Blanchard and Sheldon Bowles and "Zingerman's Guide to Giving Great Service" by Ari Weinzwieg, both of which help to reinforce the company's employee and customer focus. **PB**

NHQ JUDGES

FRANK ALEXANDER
Actus Lend Lease
Nashville, Tenn.

DAVID CALIGARIS
The Green Co.
Newton, Mass.

KEVIN EGAN
T.W. Lewis
Tempe, Ariz.

KEVIN ESTES
Estes Builders
Sequim, Wash.

TOM GILLESPIE
Rolling Meadows, Ill.

DAN GORSKI
Veridian Homes
Madison, Wis.

DANIEL GREEN
The Green Co.
Newton, Mass.

DENIS LEONARD
Business Excellence Consulting
Bozeman, Mont.

STAN LUHR
Qualitybuilt
San Diego

SERGE OGRANOVITCH
The Potomack Group
Locust Grove, Va.

CHIP PENNINGTON
Shea Homes
Scottsdale, Ariz.

ALEX SALOUTOS
The Office of Alex Saloutos
Madison, Wis.

CHARLIE SCOTT
Woodland, O'Brien & Scott
St. Paul, Minn.

GARY ZAJICEK
Veridian Homes
Madison, Wis.

PAUL CARDIS
Avid Ratings
Madison, Wis.

The National Housing Quality Awards are sponsored by Professional Builder.

JUDGES' INSIGHT

Watch and listen to the judges on the Wayne Homes site visit share highlights of the NHQ Silver-winning company at www.HousingZone.com/PB.



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THE GREEN HOUSE EFFECT

The 2009 Somerset Collection Show Home in Birmingham, Mich., had visitors seeing green for a good cause: proceeds from tickets benefited three different charities. The Tudor-style home boasts the latest sustainable green building products and materials but doesn't skimp on luxury features. The home is by Dominick Tringali Architects in Bloomfield Hills, Mich., and Custom Homes by Derocher in Royal Oak, Mich.

Photo: James Haefner

INSIDE

Raise your employees' morale [page 23]

Tune up your sales process [page 24]

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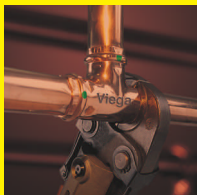
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[MORALE]

Raise Employee Morale



Happy, thriving employees can help you weather the storm.

By Rodney Hall, The Talon Group

I recently asked my network of home-building professionals about the link between employee satisfaction and customer satisfaction, and everyone agreed employee satisfaction affects customer satisfaction. While you can manage around an unhappy employee and achieve customer satisfaction short-term, it wouldn't be sustainable. The key to long-term success is to have happy, thriving employees.

So, what can a company do to promote employee satisfaction today, given the current market environment? The answers are diverse:

- **Study up on motivation.** More than a few

serving others; who use “we” when describing successes and “I” when describing failures; who take ownership of things that need to get done; and who are the least likely to pass the buck down the line when a homeowner complains. They're more anxious to delight the customer, too.

- **Manage better and more clearly.** Several respondents noted that employee satisfaction comes from challenging people, empowering them with decision-making authority and being held accountable for the results. Employee satisfaction was

bad they may be. Warns one builder: “Withholding information leads to rumors and speculation on worst-case scenarios, which are usually worse than the reality.”

- **Have a plan and stick to it.** Once you've communicated that the sky is falling, be ready to share a survival plan. This shifts the employees' focus from the problem to the solution. Remind everyone — daily if necessary — to focus on the job at hand. One builder described it as a Zen-like focus: “Be here now and use your energy on the things you can control today, not on what you can't control.”
- **Take your own medicine.** Don't ask your team to go the extra mile if you aren't willing to do the same, regardless how much you control their destiny.
- **Loudly celebrate the small wins along the way.** To paraphrase Bonnie Raitt, let's “give them something to talk about” — something positive. **PB**

Rodney Hall is a senior partner in The Talon Group, a leading executive search firm specializing in the real-estate development and home-building industries.

Morale Boosters

Recognize and show appreciation. An enjoyable and rewarding work environment makes people happy.

Offer employees an extra paid week off annually or one Friday off per month.

Give all managers gift cards to hand out whenever someone goes above and beyond.

Offer company-owned vacation homes to all employees.

Ask employees their opinions. Be prepared to share the unfiltered results with the entire team and let them know solutions.

Cut the reins and “authorize” employees to exercise creativity and ownership over challenges facing the company.

The key to long-term success is to have **happy, thriving** employees.

respondents cited Abraham Maslow's Theory of Human Motivation and Frederick Herzberg's Motivational Theory. Both provide great insights into what drives your team.

- **Hire the right people from the start.** Look for people with a healthy, optimistic outlook on life. These are candidates who enjoy

higher among teams who worked for “demanding but fair” supervisors over “nice guys.”

- **You can't over-communicate.** “Keep people informed on a weekly basis.” “Be open and honest.” “Tell the truth.” Companies are not doing anyone a favor by sparing the details, no matter how



Read Rodney's blog at
www.HousingZone.com/PB

REVITALIZE Your Sales

By John Rymer, New Home Knowledge

AS ANY FIRST-YEAR ECONOMICS STUDENT CAN TELL YOU, when the U.S. is producing 1.45 million new annual households and starting only about 600,000 new homes, eventually things get out of sync and more new-home activity will soon follow. While picking a date to declare the bottom of the current housing cycle is a fool's game, it's fair to say that in the not-too-distant future, new-home activity is going to increase substantially. The question is, to whom go the spoils as the market begins to expand?

Lots of things go into getting ready for the coming market expansion: financial wherewithal, access to land, scalable back-end processes, purchasing acumen and a great management team. Yet for those with a memory long enough to remember the day of a neutral new-home market, a top-shelf sales team needs to be at the upper most part of your priorities.

So why focus on revitalizing your sales team now?

1. You want to get ready for an expanding market. The new-home market is set to expand, and sales professionals will lead the way in allowing builders to grab market share.

2. It's your best investment. Most industry experts expect margins to remain razor thin. Throwing money at sales personnel is not a viable strategy. Focusing on sales operations and motivation is the most prudent path to an outstanding sales team.

3. Your staff needs motivation. With few sales quotas being met or exceeded in the last few years, most sales professionals feel disenchanting, underappreciated and in need of motivation and a fresh start.

STEP 1 INVEST IN THE RIGHT TEAM

Before thinking about fortifying your sales efforts, determine if you've got the right players in which to invest. No amount of attention, training, counseling and motivation will convert a poorly matched or disenchanting sales member into a sales super-

Motivate your team and prepare for the new market by training your sales force now.

Team

star. Begin by asking yourself three basic questions:

1. Do your team members proactively accept responsibility for achieving sales?
2. Are they satisfied with their skills and performance, or are they hungry to improve?
3. Are their values consistent with those of the company?

The first group that needs to leave is the sales professionals who are ambivalent about achieving more sales and believe they are held hostage to the marketplace. They are the wrong fit for the position. Sure these team members are typically easy to manage — they do a great job with filling out reports and do not often rock the boat in sales meetings — but at the end of the day they are not all-focused on converting semi-warm prospects into ardent home buyers.

The second group of misfits is what I refer to as “Sales Superstars of 2005.” Many of these folks believe they already possess the skills necessary to be highly successful — “Hey, I sold 44 homes and made \$200,000-plus in 2005.” They are not only lazy but are deceiving themselves on how much work is required to truly be a top performer in a typical new-home marketplace. Wish them well and hope that another market like 2005 comes along soon.

The third group is the most difficult to part ways. They are proven sales professionals. They know how to sell and work hard at achieving sales goals. The problem is, as your company grows, their constant undermining of management will ultimately be more detrimental than helpful in making sales. Not to be confused with team players who have passionate views on how to improve sales, these folks second-guess every man-

agement decision, look for ways to overrule existing protocol and want nothing more than to be the sole decision maker within the company without the responsibility for dealing with the consequences of their actions. It's a tough call but one you need to make before the market takes off and your sales team becomes permanently disenchanted.

STEP 2 ESTABLISH BENCHMARKS

Once you've got the right players, it's time to re-establish expectations — and just as important to reinforce and manage the metrics you put in place. There are three essential benchmarks of every great sales team:

Know your competition as well as you know yourself

Every great sales professional is intimately familiar with whom they compete. If your sales team relies on “Internet-based” competitive market analysis to analyze competition, think again. How do your competitors' discounts work? Do they have a full-time professional sales agent on site every day? How does their community maintenance compare to yours? How many net sales have they achieved in the last 30 days?

The Internet won't provide the answers. Top sales teams have a current review of every top competitor at least every 60 days. Sharing competitor shops can be a great part of every sales meeting. Ask the sales professionals to provide the top advantages of the competition and how your community outshines their competition. Ask agents to send a copy of the

report to management and keep a current copy on file at the sales office.

Formalize customer follow-up systems

As sad as it sounds, fewer than $\frac{1}{3}$ of visitors to new-home sales centers ever receive any follow-up from the sales staff. Sadder still is the fact that sales from the communities that do keep in touch with customers are nearly twice that of communities' representatives who fail to follow-up. One of the biggest traps to formalized follow-up is that elaborate follow-up programs are easy to develop but tougher to maintain and monitor. My suggestion is to keep it simple but demand that minimal customer follow-up standards are maintained. Here are the essentials:

■ **Differentiate follow-up by customer ratings.** Customers looking to make a new-home decision in the next three weeks should receive a higher level of attention than those who are looking for a home "after their bankruptcy goes away." Everyone should receive follow-up, but your sales team will become discouraged if they are required to follow-up with everyone equally.

■ **Utilize phone, mail and e-marketing.** No one method of follow-up is best for every customer. Great follow-up involves taking advantage of every opportunity. Misspelled e-mail addresses and spam filters are the hidden death nail to many elaborate e-mail campaigns.

■ **Monitor follow-up activities.** One well-known builder has told me repeatedly about the number of sales his e-marketing follow-up campaign has achieved for his company. After I blindly registered twice at his communities and never receiving any follow-up via e-mail, snail mail or phone, I know he could make more sales by trying to do a better job with monitoring follow-up activities. Call sheets and notes on registration cards are a great way to monitor phone follow-up. Mailing meter codes assigned to individual sales professionals are a good test of what actually makes its way to the post office. E-mail programs typically have diagnostic tools to let you see who is opening what's being sent.

Create best-in-the-business Realtor relations

There has always been a love/hate relationship between builders and the general realty community. With that said, the relationship has been tested even further during the latest building cycle. Get past the numerous problems that Realtors create and their often lack of work ethic. Focus on the 60-plus percent of new-home sales that are done with some varying degree of Realtor assistance — or at least a Realtor registration. Here's how the best builders are committing to improve

their Realtor relationship standards:

■ **Define minimal general Realtor activity standards.** Establish a points system for monthly on-site visits to top Realtor offices, hosting general Realtor sales meetings at your community, using e-blasts or sending hot sheets. Get your sales team involved in determining minimal standards. They are likely to be tougher on setting minimums than you, and you are more likely to get buy-in once the standards are established.

One of the biggest traps to formalized follow-up is that elaborate follow-up programs are easy to develop but tougher to maintain and monitor.

■ **Out of sight, out of mind.** Remember that for every new-home sale by a Realtor, four existing homes are sold. Just because you touched base with Realtors two months ago doesn't mean they remember much about your community. E-blasts are a great way to stay in touch, but just provide the facts (prices, delivery dates, square footage) and a great photo or two. Long winded e-blasts get deleted before they get read.

■ **Realtors have a relationship with your sales agent, not your company.** While it is not uncommon to have high sales turnover during a down market, don't think the great promotion your company had two on-site-agents ago has any impact on your current Realtor relationships. Make sure your current sales team re-establishes relationships with Realtors who have done business with your company in the past.

■ **Remember the 90/10 Rule.** As we all know, 90 percent of the Realtor sales are made by 10 percent of the general Realtors. A shotgun approach to Realtor relationships will put a dent in your purse strings without necessarily putting a dent in your sales. Finding the top general realty professionals is easy. Getting their attention is the tougher assignment.

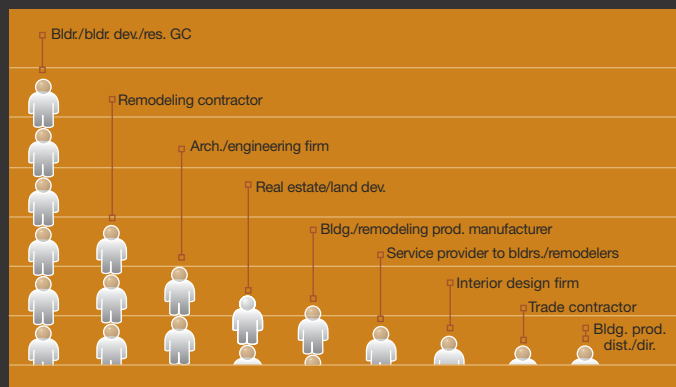
STEP 3 FOCUS ON MOTIVATION AND TRAINING

With missed sales quotas, operating losses and high cancellation rates, it's little wonder that builders are shy about spending time, effort and especially dollars on training and motivating their sales teams. But with an impending market expansion, now is the time to commit. Jack Welsh, the well-regarded former CEO of General Electric, is fond of saying, "I always demanded high standards from our employees, but we also believed in investing in them through training and giving huge hugs when they succeed."

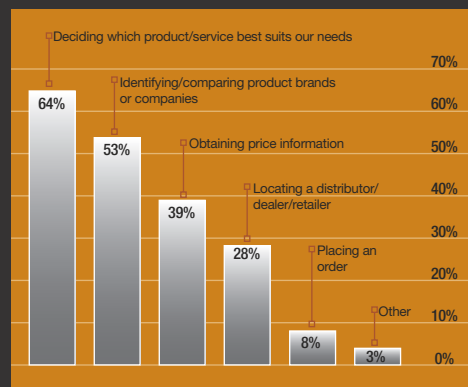
Sales training: Providing a path to greater success

It is understandable that sales training budgets have been cut

WHO IS VISITING?



Source: HousingZone Visitor Research Study, October 2008



WHY THEY ARE VISITING?

- ▶ Industry news/key issues
- ▶ Design ideas/concepts
- ▶ Products
- ▶ Best practices/case studies
- ▶ Economic outlook & insights
- ▶ Research
- ▶ Online Education
- ▶ Projects & industry developments
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to the bone in recent years. But in the face of an expanding marketplace, sales training is an essential element of grabbing market share. Sales professionals need a roadmap to success that is front and center in their everyday mindset.

So how do you leverage the training dollars you have? Have everyone in your company on the same page when it comes to sales standards. A pick-and-choose menu may be great in a Chinese restaurant, but it's not appropriate for new-home sales. Set minimum selling standards that apply to every member of your sales team.

Monitor and critique results through role plays in sales meetings and through periodic shopping reports. If you don't have the budget for dedicated on-site professional training, consider online new-home sales courses. The best of both worlds is where online course work reinforces on-site training. Do your research before hiring a new-home sales trainer. Ask for and call references. Also ask the trainer for his or her participant satisfaction ratings before making a final decision.

Have everyone in your company on the same page when it comes to sales standards. A pick-and-choose menu may be great in a Chinese restaurant, but it's not appropriate for new-home sales.

Motivating your sales team: a forgotten art?

How would your sales team describe the sales environment of your company? If fun doesn't come up in one of the first few adjectives, you're certainly not getting the most from your team. Sales professionals by nature respond to challenges and recognition far better than fear and intimidation. Here are some of the high-value motivational items:

1. Sales contests: Contests are a great motivational tool to get extra focus on sales and an incremental 10–15 percent increase in sales over 6–8 weeks. Budget 5–10 percent of your

total annual sales compensation dollars for contests. But remember that sales contests are counterproductive if the sales goal is viewed as unobtainable.

2. Fun sales meetings: If you don't hear laughter and cheering coming from your sales meetings, you need to redesign the format. This does not mean that poor sales performance is something to gloss over and laugh about. But great sales meetings celebrate sales, are fun and challenge team members with tasks such as role playing. They also leave the group on an up-note about needed accomplishments for the coming week.

3. Recognition: Kind words and recognition go a long way toward higher productivity with sales professionals. A tough market and thin margins should not take away from an outstanding sales effort.

4. Spiffs and bonuses: Sales professionals love challenges. Spice up your compensation program with special incentives for your sales team. Whether adding a bonus on a hard-to-sell home or adding a spiff when a sales professional gets more initial deposit money, a motivated sales team will respond.

Revitalizing your sales is not about locating a single silver bullet. It's a commitment in time and resources to grow the proficiency of your sales team. While the future is likely to hold a significant increase in new-home sales activity, it is just as likely to require more work and more discipline from new-home sales professionals. Sowing the seeds now is the best insurance to capture added market share. **PB**

John Rymer is the founder of New Home Knowledge, which offers sales training for home builders and real-estate professionals. He also writes a monthly column in Professional Builder. You can reach him at john@newhomeknowledge.com.

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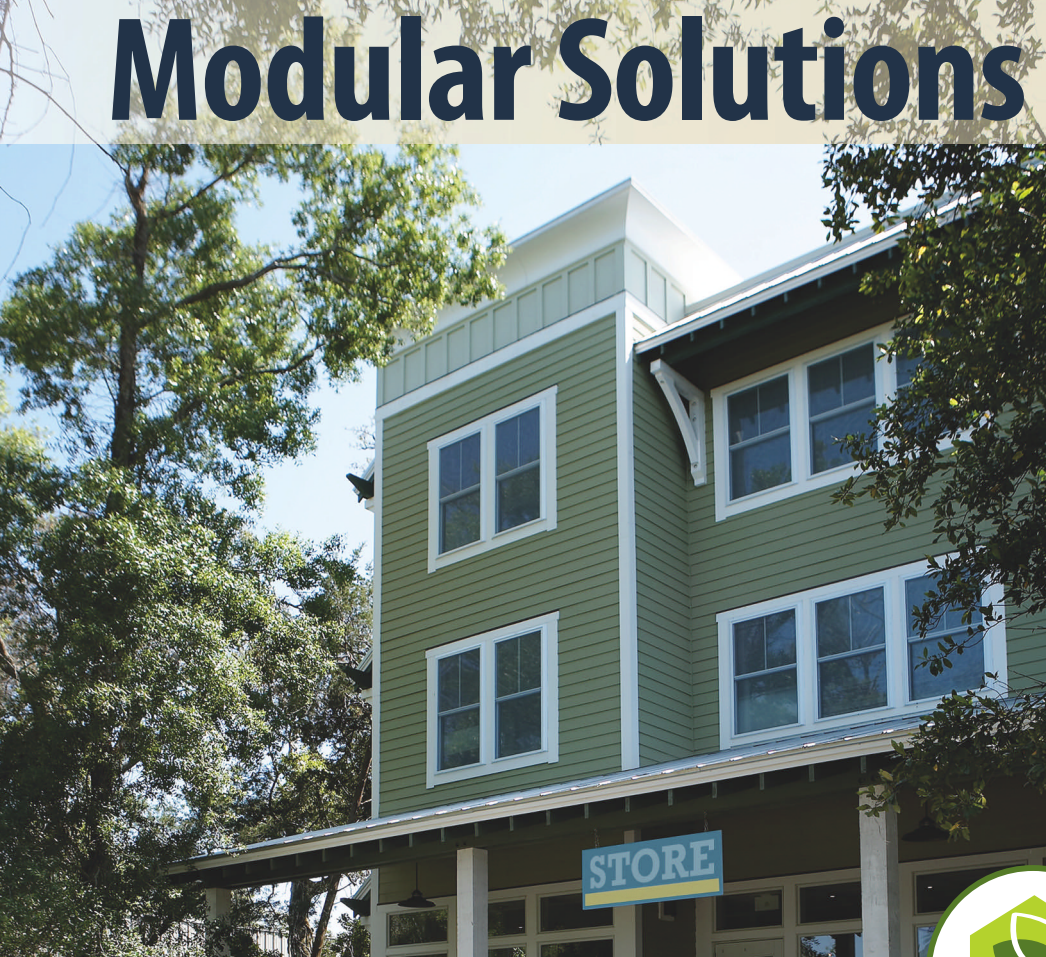
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Those who say you can't have both high design and affordability aren't acquainted with the 1,200-square-foot Shot-Trot. This hybrid of shotgun cottage and dogtrot house consists of two modules connected by a breezeway, or dogtrot. Houston architect/builder Brett Zamore is selling the floor plans through Hometta.com, a Web site offering modern designs by award-winning, progressive architects.

SMALL WONDER

Photo: Hester & Hardaway Photography

INSIDE

Tempt your entry-level buyers
[page 34]



CAPTURE



34

A Young professionals snapped up all 12 homes in this infill community in San Francisco's suburbs. The sophisticated contemporary architecture and interior vaulted spaces convey a loft-like feel. Described by the builder as "unattached townhomes," they're actually densely packed, single-family units.

Builder: Clarum Homes, Palo Alto, Calif.; Architect: EDI Architecture, San Francisco; Photo: Mert Carpenter

B Outdoor living areas don't have to be huge, but they should be easy to furnish. Offer a fireplace as a value-added upgrade.

Builder: Simonini Builders, Charlotte, N.C.; Architect: Dominick Tringali Architects, Bloomfield Hills, Mich.; Photo: Michael LoBiondo

C Clean lines, contemporary styling and neutral-color backgrounds with pops of bold color appeal to young first-time buyers. Chocolate brown contrasts with this room's white ceiling detail and acts as a backdrop for sunset-orange accents in the artwork, pillows and furnishings.

Builder: Fidelity Homes, Venice, Fla.; Architect: The Evans Group, Orlando, Fla.; Interior Designer: Kay Green Design, Orlando, Fla.; Photo: Pollux Photography

D Gen X and Gen Y buyers "salivate over social opportunity," says Ashley Jennings of Kay Green Design. This small space is merchandised for casual entertaining, with a poker table and flat-screen TV.

Builder: Dock Street Communities, Myrtle Beach, S.C.; Architect: Pegram Associates, Myrtle Beach,



S.C.; Interior Designer: Kay Green Design, Orlando, Fla.; Photo: Dock Street Communities

E The kitchen and family room should be interactive spaces, defined not by walls but by details such as a breakfast bar.

Builder: Centerline Homes, Coral Springs, Fla.; Interior Designer: Kay Green Design, Orlando, Fla.; Photo: Centerline Homes

F First-time buyers look for attractive community entrances and common areas as well as amenities, says Dennis Webb, sales

manager of Fulton Homes in Phoenix. "They want walking [trails], they want parks," says Webb. "At one community, we're going to be building an aquatic center."

Builder: Fulton Homes, Phoenix; Photo: Fulton Homes

G A strong indoor-outdoor connection is essential. Here, the main living areas flow into the outdoor space.

Builder: Simonini Builders, Charlotte, N.C.; Architect: Dominick Tringali Architects, Bloomfield Hills, Mich.; Photo: Michael LoBiondo



THE NEW

To a degree, generations X and Y want the same design features as other home buyers, but there are subtle differences in their lifestyles, attitudes and priorities. Here we illustrate some of the design elements and community attributes that convince young buyers to take the plunge.

By Susan Bady, Senior Editor, Design

FIRST-TIME BUYER



H A shed roof; wraparound porch; and mix of horizontal and vertical siding add visual interest to this affordably priced home.

Builder: Brooklynn Custom Homes, Novi, Mich.; Architect: Dominick Tringali Architects, Bloomfield Hills, Mich.; Photo: Les Ward Photography

I Small touches, such as including blinds as a standard feature, are appreciated at ForeverHome's Raleigh-Durham, N.C., communities.

Builder: ForeverHome, Raleigh, N.C.; Architect: Frazier Home Design, Wake Forest, N.C.; Photo: Kyle Ketchel/Visual Properties

2M

Projected number of households over the next 10 years that will be headed by individuals age 25 to 34.

Source: Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University

65

Percentage of total U.S. home sales made by first-time buyers in the first quarter of 2009, a 41 percent increase from the same period last year.

Source: Kleber & Associates

82

Percentage of adult Millennials who say it's important to own a home.

Source: Frank N. Magid Associates

50

Percentage of Millennials who are likely to purchase a home within the next three years.

Source: The Concord Group



K



J



L

36

J Townhomes typically come standard with one-car garages, if there are garages at all. Here, the two-car garage and covered front porch are included.

Builder: ForeverHome, Raleigh, N.C.; Architect: Frazier Home Design, Wake Forest, N.C.; Photo: Kyle Ketchel/Visual Properties

K Always provide a place for young buyers to work at home, whether it's a spare bedroom or a computer desk in a loft or alcove.

Builder: ForeverHome, Raleigh, N.C.; Architect: Frazier Home Design, Wake Forest, N.C.; Photo: Kyle Ketchel/Visual Properties

L First-time buyers were excited about the rear-loaded, two-car garages; large windows; and upper-level bonus rooms at this suburban Philadelphia townhome community. But

few purchased upgrades, preferring to add them later and do the work themselves if possible.

Builder: Progressive Housing Ventures, Malvern, Pa.; Architect: Barton Partners, Norristown, Pa.; Photo: Rick Davis Photographic

M Gen X and Gen Y buyers appreciate having a public place outside the home to entertain friends and get to know their neighbors.

Builder: Progressive Housing Ventures, Malvern, Pa.; Architect: Barton Partners, Norristown, Pa.; Photo: Rick Davis Photographic

Products They'll Ask About

N Younger buyers have done their research and will scrutinize every feature that contributes to a home's energy efficiency, particularly windows.

Photo: Marvin Windows and Doors

O They may not want to pay extra for a tankless water heater, but they're certainly eager to find out if it's an option.

Photo: Takagi

P A whole-house air purification systems is an upgrade that first-time buyers probably can't afford yet, but they still want the information.

Photo: Trane

Q Modular and panelized systems and other off-site construction processes appeal to generations X and Y because the features reduce waste.

Photo: Haven Custom Homes

R Include Energy Star appliances in your kitchens — buyers expect no less.

Photo: KitchenAid



N



More Features for First-Timers

Want to see what else gets first-time buyers off the fence? Watch our slide show at HousingZone.com/PB.



Get more ideas at
www.HousingZone.com/PB

What 'Home' Means to Gen X and Gen Y

Gen Y views home as a social hub.

Gen X views home as a sanctuary.

Gen Y wants a home that requires little maintenance because they like to hit the road on the spur of the moment.

Gen Y takes it for granted that their new home will be energy-efficient but doesn't want to pay extra for green features.

Both generations want a well-designed, basic home; they tend to avoid expensive options and upgrades that don't contribute to resale value.

Both generations want a home that can expand as their family grows.

Both generations want a strong indoor-outdoor connection.

Both generations prefer open floor plans that accommodate gatherings with family and friends.

Both generations prefer interior spaces that are optimized for storage.

*Both generations are turned off by wasted square footage. **PB***



Most-Desirable Home and Community Features

- Exteriors with curb appeal — modern interpretations of classic architectural styles such as Colonial, Craftsman and Victorian
- Interiors with a loft-style feel
- A two-car garage wide enough for cars plus storage
- Large windows for lots of natural light
- Higher ceilings to enhance feeling of spaciousness
- Flex rooms such as a den or study that can also be a bedroom
- Master bedrooms with interesting ceiling treatments and other memorable details
- Large walk-in closets
- Four- instead of five-fixture master bathrooms
- Outdoor living spaces with minimal grass, especially courtyards, decks, porches and patios that can be furnished
- Features that reduce energy consumption, improve indoor air quality and reduce environmental impact
- “Communal” kitchens that accommodate several cooks
- Structured wiring and other high-tech features
- A dedicated home office or computer desk
- Interactive spaces separated by details such as a fireplace or staggered ceiling heights
- Second-floor options, such as one master suite or two bedrooms with separate bathrooms or a shared bathroom
- Bolder exterior paint colors that enliven the streetscape
- Fitness facilities
- Walking and biking trails
- A location near employment corridors, major highways, mass transit, services, shopping and entertainment





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MEET RICKO

Ricko is a 12-year-old, 2,800-pound Eastern Black Rhinoceros at the Birmingham, Ala., Zoo. He's there to put Mohawk's new SmartStrand Triexta carpet with DuPont Sorona stain protector through its toughest paces. Mohawk reps say that if the carpet can stand up to a rhinoceros, it'll handle pretty much anything a human can throw at it.

INSIDE

Great new exterior doors [*page 41*]

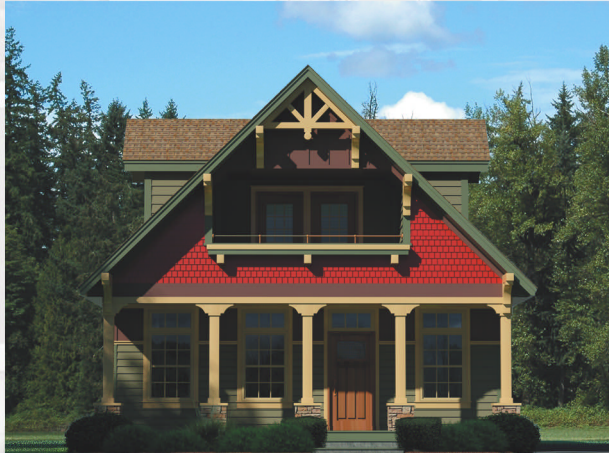
Millwork & molding products to spruce up ho-hum rooms [*page 43*]

Should you go wired or wireless?
[*page 44*]

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For more information visit: www.pbshowvillage.com

[EXTERIOR DOORS]

Keep the Elements Out



Keep a Low Profile

The sliding patio and sliding French doors from Marvin now have an ADA-compliant option: the new Low Profile Sill. It stands just ¾-inch off the base flooring to help you build an easy transition between inside and out. It features a DP-40 rating and a flush profile. **For more info, go to HousingZone.com/PBinfo and enter # 251**

Don't Get Scorched

Fire, meet your match. Plastpro's new Fire-Rated Fiber-glass doors feature stiles as well as top and bottom rails in each door that are designed to meet fire-rating code regulations. Each fire-rated entry product features Plastpro's Hydrosield Technology, which allows the doors to resist denting, splintering, warping and corrosion. **For more info, go to HousingZone.com/PBinfo and enter # 252**

41

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For more info, go to HousingZone.com/PBinfo and enter # 23727-15

[EXTERIOR DOORS]



Span the Distance

Expanding and embracing the essence of modern living, Kolbe's TerraSpan doors can incorporate up to 10 panels per unit with a 12-foot maximum panel height. Each panel is 2 1/4 inches thick, so it requires minimum space when open. Builders can install the doors so they nest behind one another or are recessed into a pocket opening. **For more info, go to HousingZone.com/PBinfo and enter # 253**

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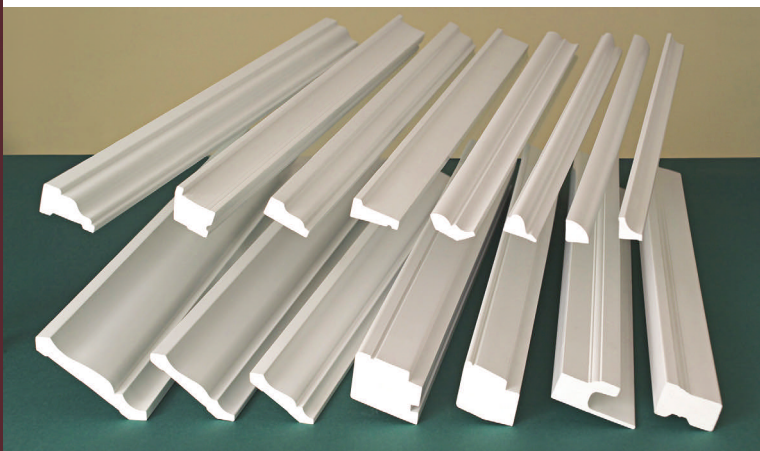
[MILLWORK & MOLDING]

Milling Around



Ride the River

A little touch of elegance goes a long way. Elegant Additions from White River is a compact molding collection of fine grain overlay contoured to PacTrim (primed MDF) to produce high-relief moldings. The line is priced 30 to 50 percent below the company's Mon Reale flagship collection. Builders can stain, paint or glaze for the well-appointed interior. **For more info, go to HousingZone.com/PBinfo and enter # 255**



That's a Plus

Want the look of plaster but would rather pay for pine? Architectural Products by Outwater has the solution in the Wood Plus+ line. You'll get a premium grade, wooden core harvested from managed, renewable forests fused with a durable, ultra-smooth latex bonding (PVA/Calcium Carbonate) that can be painted without priming. **For more info, go to HousingZone.com/PBinfo and enter # 256**

Pick Up the Post

Hafele America recently introduced large-scale, 24-inch-long corbels and a line of large-scale posts. Both use design elements found on the traditional, Arts & Crafts and Americana (Rope) collections. These corbels and posts are great decorative ingredients for islands, desks, countertops and fireplace mantles. You can find them in maple or cherry.

For more info, go to HousingZone.com/PBinfo and enter # 257



Kleer-ly Cool

Check out these extruded free-foam cellular PVC building products from Kleer Lumber. Made for both interior and exterior applications, the new line features 16 different styles and thicknesses, including base cap, bed, brick, cove, crown, drip cap, J-channel, quarter round, rake, shingle band and sill nosing. Sizes vary, and custom sizes can be special-ordered through the company's dealers. **For more info, go to HousingZone.com/PBinfo and enter # 258**

[A/V SYSTEMS]

Wired or Wireless?

Does it make sense to stick with structured wiring or to opt for a wireless whole-home solution? Short answer: both.

By Nick Bajzek, Products Editor

Owners of multi-room audio/video systems assign high value to their home entertainment experience, according to a new study from the Consumer Electronics Association). The study, "Trends in Multi-room Audio Video Usage," found that 82 percent of homeowners with an such a system would recommend it to their friends.

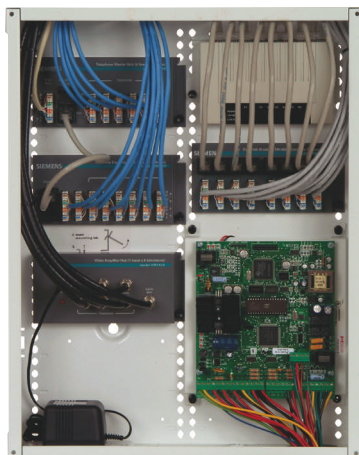
These systems are gaining in popularity; should a production builder opt for a tried-and-true wired system or go with a new wireless solution? Melody Bakeeff, vice president of marketing for In Control Technologies, says builders should opt for a wired "future-proof" system.

"Wired systems are the most reliable in relation to signal-response," Bakeeff says.

"Many people have trouble just with wireless Internet. Compound that with trying to control lights or other functions in the home and it can be quite frustrating."

The Consumer Electronics Association study also concluded that after-market multi-room audio/video solutions are capturing a large portion of the home entertainment marketplace. Sixty-three percent of systems were installed after the home was built. The majority of homeowners added stand-alone, after-market solutions with multi-room audio stations.

George Ide at Digital Interiors in Atlanta says a wireless system has its place because it has the advantage of mobility and is easy to retrofit. "While we complain about dropped calls on our cell phone, what would we do without them?" he says. "Wi-Fi in a home is invaluable to allow the resident to sit by the pool and access the Internet from their laptop. A wireless



A RELIABLE whole-home A/V system mixes structured wiring with wireless spot solutions. Photo: Siemens

remote for the entertainment system makes it very convenient to use."

Pros and cons

The biggest downside of a wired system is poor design, says Ide. He's seen many homes where the builders used their electrician to run low-voltage wiring, such as outdoor speakers and even cable/telephone locations. "I can't tell you the number of speakers I've seen placed where the sound will be directly impacted by a ceiling fan," he says,

noting that although wireless systems may be convenient for retrofitting, they can still suffer from installation issues.

Aaron Gutin, national sales director for Access Networks, says most of the solutions work off either a hub or the signal is "daisy-chained" and passed-on from one piece of equipment to the other. "So if you don't have a substantial enough amount of equipment, the signal can become weak and the response times are significantly slowed, or potential devices might not work at all, due to the spacing," Gutin says.

Just make sure it works

Simplicity is the bottom line, says Laura N. Hubbard, manager of communications for the Consumer Electronics Association.

Bill Jeppsen, public relations manager for Ruckus Wireless, agrees: "So, while we are biased for a wireless solution, we're grounded in reality. There are serious cost and practicality issues. Each and every situation is different." **PB**

FAST FACTS

THE MAIN REASON

homeowners specify a multi-room audio video system is to enhance their home entertainment experience

(63%)

enjoy listening

(61%)

and entertain.

(48%)

85% of

homeowners who own such as system are so satisfied with their experience they would once again install a system in a new home. Multi-room audio video systems allow homeowners to play and control audio/video distributed from a centralized system to at least three different rooms of the home.

Source: Consumer Electronics Association's "Trends in Multi-room Audio Video Usage"

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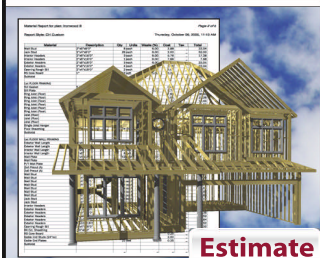
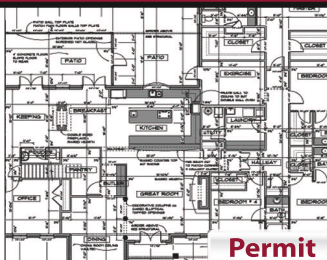
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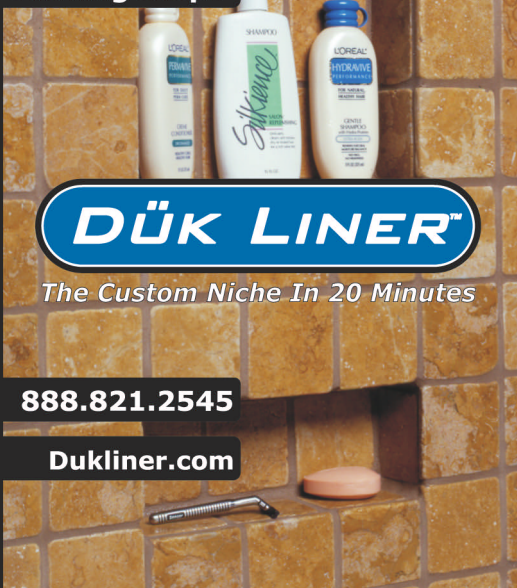
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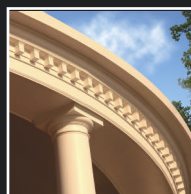
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shannon.darmody@reedbusiness.com

WESTERN REGION
Director – Residential Titles
Director – Western Region
Jeff Elliott, 616/846-4633
jelliott@reedbusiness.com

Key Accounts – Integrated Sales
Brian Grohe, 630/288-8159
brian.grohe@reedbusiness.com
States: AZ, CO, ID, MT, NM, NV, TX, UT, WY

Mike Ostrowski, 630/288-8139
michael.ostrowski@reedbusiness.com
States: AK, CA, HI, OR, WA, Western Canada

Product Specialists - Integrated Sales
Brian Grohe, 630/288-8159
brian.grohe@reedbusiness.com

EASTERN REGION
Director – Eastern Region
Dan Colunio, 781/734-8360
dcolunio@reedbusiness.com

Key Accounts – Integrated Sales
Adam Grubb, 317/913-1608
adam.grubb@reedbusiness.com
States: CT, MA, ME, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, VT, Eastern Canada

John Huff, 630/288-8189
john.huff@reedbusiness.com
States: AL, DC, DE, FL, GA, MD, MS, NC, SC, VA

Product Specialists - Integrated Sales
Jan Varnes, 630/288-8143
jan.varnes@reedbusiness.com

MIDWEST REGION
Director – Midwest Region
Rick Blesi, 630/288-8140
rblesi@reedbusiness.com

Key Accounts – Integrated Sales
Mary Adeo, 630/288-8134
madao@reedbusiness.com
States: AR, IA, IN, KS, LA, MO, ND, NE, OK, SD, WI

Tim Gillerlain, 630/288-8168
tim.gillerlain@reedbusiness.com
States: IL, KY, MN, OH, TN, WV

Product Specialists - Integrated Sales
Rob Bertrand, 630/288-8615
rob.bertrand@reedbusiness.com

Director of E-Media
Mary Nasiri, 630/288-8576
mnasiri@reedbusiness.com

Custom Project Manager
Emily Yarina, 630/288-8109
emily.yarina@reedbusiness.com

Director of Events
Judy Brociek, 630/288-8184
jbrociek@reedbusiness.com

Marketing & Client Services Coordinator
Dawn Batchelder, 630/288-8141
dawn.batchelder@reedbusiness.com

Custom Reprints and Electronic Usage
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jeanine.pranses@theygsgroup.com

Advertising Production Manager
Mike Rotz, 630/288-8427
michael.rotz@reedbusiness.com

Advertising Contracts
Melinda Werner, 630/288-8065
melinda.werner@reedbusiness.com

Graphic Production Manager
Shirley Surles, 630/288-8442
ssurles@reedbusiness.com

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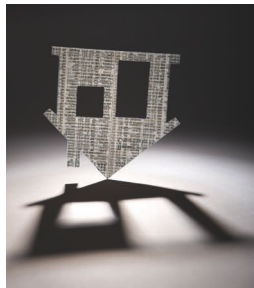
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Think about it

5 years

That's how long we'll experience stagnant



home prices, Robert Shiller of the S&P/Case-Shiller home price index told the Wall Street Journal.

1,000

The "One Year, One Thousand Green Supers" program, a collaboration between the city of New York and the Thomas Shortman Training Fund, will train 1,000

30% A University of Colorado at Boulder study found that that percentage of a sample of 50 showerheads had **high levels of Mycobacterium avium**, which you don't want to inhale or swallow: **it causes lung infections.**

2.5M Since 2007, that many homes have been converted to rentals, which accounts for the **85 percent increase** in rental homes, according to analysis by **Foresight Analytics**. During the housing boom, the trend was the reverse.



760M sq. ft. That's the **expected demand for countertops** in 2013, according to a study, "Countertops," by **The Freedonia Group**. The residential housing market comprises three quarters of the countertop market.

.1 ppm The OSHA standard for **formaldehyde levels in cabinets** is .1 parts per million. But that's only the allowable amount for worker exposure: the **U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development** allows a greater concentration.

\$100,000 In need of pricey fixtures? The **30,000-square-foot Fixtures-Visions for Living showroom in San Diego** sports a Molteni stove from France for \$100,000, a \$33,000 teak tub and \$1,000 showerheads, among other big-tag items. The company president, Phil Roxworthy, told SignOnSanDiego.com **recessions tend to be good** for his business.

117M There are 117 million households across the nation, according to the **U.S. Census Bureau** — all potential gathering places for the approaching holiday season.



commercial and high-rise superintendents in energy-efficient operations. They hope the 40-hour class will ultimately reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the city.






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