

Reaching Customers

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Customer relations have become more of a priority for homebuilders than ever before. Playing an intricate role in such things as customer retention, marketing, and referrals, technology has taken center stage for homebuilders in their quest to better service their clients.

In an effort to increase profitability and market penetration, Beazer Homes, www.beazer.com, Atlanta, Ga., a nationwide single family homebuilder with \$3.9 billion in revenues during 2004, has implemented a customer relationship management system to help its new home sales agents better connect with potential customers.

Pivotal Homebuilder FrontOffice from Pivotal Corp., www.pivotal.com, Vancouver, B.C., for mid-sized enterprises, offers sales automation, customer care solutions, and can integrate with other corporate systems. The system compiles vital data on customers and markets, providing sales agents with realtime access to the information.

The system shows the history of the home and is used to manage the service cycle, including dispatching contractors, tracking service requests, and monitoring service quality. It is also used to automatically schedule home inspections and record deficiency information to aid in making homes defect free before the owner takes possession.

Beazer found the transition smooth and within 90 days the program was running with over 500 sales agents working off the system. "Its implementation was the smoothest we've had. On day one, we had (sales agents) calling in to learn how to use some advanced features that we thought it would take weeks to learn," says Smoke.

Shea Homes Southern California, a division of Shea Homes, www.sheahomes.com, Walnut, Calif., is another builder bridging the gap between builder and buyer via technology. It is using an extensive email campaign to communicate with its customers.

In order to provide customers with email updates, it is working with NetScope Inc., www.net-scope.com, Irvine, Calif., a Website development, hosting, and maintenance company; and Kovach Marketing, www.kovachmarketing.com, Irvine, Calif., which offers market evaluation, consumer identification, and product development.

"Not only do we get information out to the homebuyers more quickly, but we get quicker response from them," says Bill Pisetsky, vice president of sales and marketing, Shea Homes. The sales agents are able to create and distribute email templates themselves.

Shea is able to use the money previously spent on other forms of communication to provide more focused customer care and savings to their homebuyers as a result.

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