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## A Customer for Life

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What qualifies as a smart investment in technology? A system that will help your company retain customers and proactively plan for a downturn in the market is a good place to start.

While there are mixed opinions regarding the health of the housing boom in the country, there is no disagreeing with the fact homebuilders that proactively plan for the downturn now will ultimately be in position to profit for the long term. Homebuilders of all sizes realize the importance that accurate customer care and service plays in this scenario, which could be a reason for the continued interest for customer-relationship management (CRM) applications.

“When the market does indeed experience a downturn, homebuilders want to be prepared, and it’s not just the larger homebuilders that are thinking this way, it is also the small to midsized builders as well (building 400-500 homes annually),” says Steve Lewkowitz, professional services director, Pivotal, [www.pivotal.com](http://www.pivotal.com), Vancouver, B.C. “With that in mind, they realize the importance of having information at their fingertips across the company.”

A System providing an integrated database for both sales and marketing is where he sees many small to medium-sized builders investing lately. Better management of Web leads without the need to increase staff is one of the biggest benefits. Working off of one integrated database also helps them keep all parties—realtors, mortgage, lenders, and customers—in the loop throughout the entire building process.

“These builders spend a lot of money on ads and other ways to reach customers, so finding a way to automate this process at a lesser a price is definitely (attractive) to them,” adds Lewkowitz. “It’s always important to keep a customer for life and a good (CRM) package will help (facilitate) this.”

Perhaps small to midsized builders are taking a cue from their larger counterparts in the industry, which continue to invest in integrated CRM packages. Along with Pivotal, other leading CRM providers continue to experience heavy demand from this segment of the market.

Siebel, [www.siebel.com](http://www.siebel.com), San Mateo, Calif., has seen interest for its on-demand offerings, in particular. Pulte Homes, [www.pulte.com](http://www.pulte.com), Bloomfield Hills, Mich., recently adopted this offering, citing its ability to centralize sales and marketing processes as being a key factor. Embracing this functionality, along with strong analytic capabilities, Pulte anticipates the offering will help grow its business through improved market segmentation, increased profitability, and a capacity to sell more homes.

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