

Highlights

Customer Profile

- Pinnacle Custom
- New Jersey
- 15 Homes per year
- High-end clientele

Business Challenges

- Documenting the process
- Homebuyer communications
- Differentiation

Solution Overview

- Web-based collaborative project management platform
- Integrated project scheduling, online selections, change order tracking and more

Business Benefits

- Customer satisfaction
- Differentiation
- Eased selections and communication
- Payment and budget tracking
- Internal efficiencies

www.pinnaclecompanies.net/pages/custom.php

Pinnacle Embraces Technology to Achieve Market Distinction as High-End Builder and Break Record on ABC's Extreme Home Makeover

Background

Pinnacle Custom has been building upscale communities in the finest locations of New Jersey and Connecticut for over 18 years. The company prides itself on its ability to identify outstanding land acquisitions and niche markets that develop into luxury communities offering significant resale appreciation. Due to Pinnacle's high profile and reputation in their region, the company was recently featured in an edition of ABC's Extreme Home Makeover.

Pinnacle Custom, led by President Michael Cantor, strives to provide a superior homebuilding experience to its customers and builds 12-15 homes per year in the \$2 million to \$15 million range. Pinnacle recognizes that the building industry is changing, offering new opportunities and concepts, and is constantly seeking innovative ways to improve processes, enhance its products and deliver an overall positive experience to its customers.

Challenges

Documenting the process

In high-end custom home building, each homeowner brings different wants and needs to the table. Each project is very different from the next and every decision and change must be meticulously documented in order to avoid costly errors. Pinnacle was searching for a central resource, accessible by the entire building team and the homebuyer, to document every detail, ensuring that the project stayed on schedule and within budget.

Further, Pinnacle builds high-end spec homes, including a recent \$13 million project. In this level of high-end home construction, the process can be complicated and Pinnacle needed a solution that would help them stay on schedule while allowing prospective homebuyers to join the process easily and customize the home to meet their requirements.

Easing homebuyer communications

Many of Pinnacle's customers travel frequently for business and/or pleasure and the project schedule is often disrupted by the homebuyer's inability to view options and make decisions in a timely manner. Pinnacle required a tool that would allow their customers to actively contribute to the schedule, ease the selection process and consolidate the paper trail for all parties involved.

Differentiation

With many other custom builders in the area, Pinnacle needed a competitive edge that would push past other players in their market and provide an enhanced experience for its homebuyers. "Even though we build superior homes, differentiating ourselves from competitors is challenging," said Steven Klenk, Vice President, Pinnacle Custom. "We are always on the lookout for new innovations that create more efficient processes, improve communication and provide a positive experience to our homebuyers."

Solution

Pinnacle was driven to improve on the success it had already achieved and turned to BuildLinks for help. BuildLinks provides Pinnacle with a web-based, collaborative, project management tool to integrate project schedules, online selections, and change order tracking into one single platform.

Results

Improved customer satisfaction and differentiation

Many of Pinnacle's customers are busy with life's challenges, stressful workloads and frequent travel. They need a builder that is committed to leveraging every resource available to make their home buying process as simple and successful as possible. With BuildLinks, homebuyers can now easily and actively participate in the building process, while Pinnacle avoids costly errors, keeps schedules on track, and adheres to budgets. The end result is simple, but powerful - a positive experience for everyone involved. Sub-contractors and homebuyers are able to access real-time information, ensuring they are always on the same page. Plus, purchasers of spec homes can review decisions already made and pick-up where the builder left off, enabling them to customize their new home.

"We like to focus on our use of this technology in our early meetings with prospective customers," said Klenk. "It has helped us differentiate ourselves from other custom home builders in the area and enhances the overall experience of building a home with us."

Efficient selections, budget and payment tracking

With BuildLinks, homebuyers better understand their participation in the building process and how their delays affect the schedule. Deadlines for decisions are noted and the entire process is clearly documented and available to homebuyers. The budget is also incorporated into the selection process so that the financial implications of homebuyer decisions are clearly noted.

"When a change is made, not only is an email notification sent to the subcontractor, helping avoid costly mistakes, but the overall budget is automatically updated, so there are no surprises when the project is complete," said Klenk. "It's also very simple for me to see if and when a payment has been made. I don't have to dig through past paperwork or hound my customer when the payment process is documented in the project's website."

Effective communication

Pinnacle found that BuildLinks aids its communications efforts with both the homebuyer and the multitude of vendors and subcontractors involved in a project. With the entire project outlined via the Web and easily accessed from the construction site, most questions regarding the project can be answered instantly. When changes are made, an email alert is sent to notify the vendor and/or subcontractor affected: time-consuming paperwork is avoided and faxes are not lost as a result. Plus, materials orders are made on time and subcontractors know when their participation is required to maintain the schedule.

Increased internal efficiencies ... that leveraged a key opportunity

By providing a web-based alternative to the traditional home building process, BuildLinks has put Pinnacle at the technology forefront in the residential building industry, creating a key advantage over its competitors. By using BuildLinks over a secure, broadband connection, Pinnacle's on-site team conveniently manages the building process in real-time.

Pinnacle's reputation and adoption of technology recently paid off when they were selected to build a technologically automated home for a very worthy family on ABC's Extreme Home Makeover. While this was a significant opportunity to showcase their work on national television, they achieved additional recognition by completing the home in 75% of the allotted time. Pinnacle published the aggressive schedule on BuildLinks to coordinate the efforts of subcontractors and more than 3500 volunteers. The one-week schedule was broken down into hourly tasks, so these participants could check progress on the project's website before arriving at the jobsite, and review progress made since their last shift. By making the project available to all participants, Klenk could focus more time on managing the product vs. the process.

"I had watched Extreme Home Makeover numerous times before ABC solicited our participation and I never really believed that the homes were truly built in 106 hours or less, but it really happens," said Klenk. "Through BuildLinks and our commitment to technology, everyone involved in the project was able to follow hourly plans and progress, stay on track, and finish the home in record time!"

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