

Oklahoma Builder

**Oklahoma State Home
Builders Association**



May/June 2011



Member Involvement Equals **Key to Success**

Get involved in membership recruitment, legislative calls to action, education and more to achieve goals.

**OSHBA Summer
Convention
July 14-16, 2011**

**Builder Profile
Elite Quality Homes**

Helping the Troy Aikman Foundation is just one of the reasons to build your homes with Acme Brick.



To increase your potential homebuyers' preference for the Acme brand, we partner with one of America's most recognized and trusted spokespersons, Troy Aikman. Acme also

makes a contribution to the Troy Aikman Foundation for children for each Acme Brick home purchased this year.

Quality conscious homebuyers know that there are other good reasons to look for the Acme Brick logo on new homes.

Buyers know that Acme's beautiful colors from nature won't fade like concrete simulated brick, and that our transferable Homebuyers'

Limited Guarantee covers both materials and labor for 100 years. These buyers now have the added assurance of the Good Housekeeping Seal.*

We've also made selecting the right Acme Brick easier than ever for your customers. By using Acme's

innovative software, Design Online, homebuyers can view various home exteriors and interactively change brick, mortar, roof and trim colors to find the combination that they

prefer. Design Online is a free download at brick.com.



This year, your potential customers will receive more than 100 million advertising impressions about Acme's partnership with Troy and with the Troy Aikman Foundation via television, billboards, and point-of-sale materials. If you aren't already a member of the Acme/Aikman team, we invite you to join us today. Please contact your local Acme representative for details and for model home point-of-sale displays.

When you build a home with Acme Brick, you're giving your homebuyer the longest lasting, most trouble-free exterior available.

Your potential buyers are looking for the Acme logo. We hope that you will too.

*A survey by Fairfield Research found that 95% of American women believe that the Seal denotes a product's quality.





**Oklahoma State Home
Builders Association**

917 N.E. 63 Oklahoma City, OK 73105
405-843-5579 • 800-256-9980

Executive Editor

Mike Means • mikem@oshba.org

OSHBA Executive Committee

President: Michael Herndon
VP/Treasurer: Brandon Perkins
VP/Secretary: Jeff Click
Immediate Past President: Tom French
National Director: David Ritchie
Alt. National Director: Bud Blakley
National Representative: Brandon Perkins

Committee Chairs

Budget & Audit: Brandon Perkins
Builders Certification: Tony Foust
Build PAC: Brandon Perkins, Jeff Click
Insurance: Roger Gose

Associates Council

Chair: Casey Felix
Vice Chair: Terry Jennings
Treasurer: Vanessa Shadix
Secretary: Donna Cullins
Immediate Past Chair: Jose Laboy
National Director: Barbara Franks

Associates Committee Chairs

Table Top: Donna Cullins
Auction: Vanessa Shadix
Golf: Steve Sayers

Published By PrintComm



Managing Editor Stacey Tetloff
Graphic Designer Jason Gabel
Publication Coordinator John Bitters
Advertising Sales Manager Brenda Poe

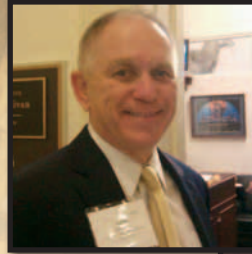
Advertising Sales

Marsha Suwinski: (800) 935-1592, ext. 106
marshas@wildblue.net

Brenda Poe: (800) 935-1592, ext. 115
bpoe@printcomm.com

contents

Volume 46 Number 2



12

features

7 **OSHBA Summer Convention**

The OSHBA Summer Convention will be held from July 14-16, 2011, in Durant, OK.

8 **Are You Fully Prepared to Take Advantage of a Stabilizing Market?**

John Barrows, president of J. Barrows Inc., discusses the recession and how to recover.

10 **Market Effectively, Efficiently with Automated Marketing**

An overview of how to make marketing work for you.

12 **Builder Profile**

Brenda Love of Elite Quality Homes puts her knowledge and experience to use to build homes she can be proud of.

departments

4 **President's First Word** *Alive and Kickin'*

5 **State Rep's Report** *Striking a Chord*

6 **Associates Council** *Where Does the Time Go?*

6 **Oklahoma Professional Women in Building** *Politics, Education and Other Benefits*

14 **By All Means** *Power of Involvement*



President's First Word

Mike Herndon

Alive and Kickin'

I'm writing this after a recent trip to Washington, D.C., after our visit to our local Capitol and right after our board meeting. To say the least, it's been a very packed two weeks. We were all very happy with the turnout of our Legislative Day, and I thank each of you for attending. Your response to Mike's request by VoterVoice has improved tremendously, and if each of you continues to stress (at the local level) its importance, it should continue to improve. I managed to get through our first board meeting with lots of support and reminders from Mike, Jeff and Brandon. As I

Hopefully all of you are building and selling homes by the time you read this.

grow older, I continue to grow in appreciation of the importance of having lots of good people around you to remind and prod you as needed. Not saying I'm more forgetful and definitely not admitting I'm old. I was, as always, very impressed with the accomplishments of each of our committees and really enjoyed hearing from our local associations. Even though membership is down some, the involvement is very strong.

Voicing Our Concerns

I woke up Thursday morning after the Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C., from the sound of gunfire outside of my window. It seems that alarms are still not needed in this great city. We were very well received and had lots of good conversation.

Our discussion centered on creation of jobs through housing. AD&C financing is still one of the top concerns. Some of our other concerns that were discussed were: home mortgage tax deduction, appraisal issues, what could be done to replace long term mortgages if Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac were eliminated, and last but not least the challenge of basic loans for housing. Our legislators were very open to suggestions and I believe it was time well spent.

Our team consisted of Phil Rhees, Ken Klein, Kimmi Houston, Mike Means and me. It was a great group on a very quick short trip. By the way, the view from the top of the Hay-Adams hotel is fantastic.

Seeing Improvement

If you haven't been following Dr. Crowe, his recent report from the Legislative Conference is available online. He shows Oklahoma housing starts better than 100 percent of normal by the fourth quarter of 2012.

Our state shows only a 6.6 percent unemployment rate with the average nationally at 9.4 percent and, even better, the Ardmore area is at 5.5 percent. Further good news, the Ardmore area had an increase of 10 percent retail sales for January and Herndon Construction shows, well we won't go there, but we're alive and kickin'.

Hopefully all of you are building and selling homes by the time you read this. Until next time, remember, in the words of Louis Pasteur, "Whether our efforts are, or not, favored by life, let us be able to say, when we come near the great goal, 'I have done what I could.'"

One last word about membership: recruit some! **OB**



CLASSIC RESIDENTIAL COPPER

Classic Residential Copper's copper cupolas, copper chimney caps and copper roof vents are not only a beautiful addition to any home, they are also functional, providing ventilation to the attic.

Finials • Cupolas • Roof Vents
Gable Vents • Chimney Caps

All products are soldered or riveted for durability and specifically designed to keep out the elements.

From gable vents to copper finials, Classic Residential Copper is sure to have an item to fit your needs.

PH: (918) 851-0419

FAX: (918) 298-4654

Check out our full line of copper products at
classicresidentialcopper.com



State Rep's Report

Brandon Perkins

Striking a Chord

NAHB continues to work diligently on many, many issues that are attacking our industry: AD&C credit crunch, appraisals, housing finance reform known by the White House Administration as "Reforming America's Housing Finance Market," 1099 legislation, mortgage interest deduction, federal budget appropriations, low-income housing tax credit, Chinese drywall, OSHA fall protection and many other items that could each have a major impact on our industry. If one of those topics doesn't strike a chord with you, you must be in a different industry!

Threatening the Flow of Credit

Unable in this column to tackle all of these important issues, I will focus on the Obama Administration's recent release of its FY 2012 budget proposal and its plans for dealing with Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, FHA and the Federal Home Loan Banks. NAHB's senior officers have held numerous meetings with Administration and Congressional leaders to discuss builders' concerns about those proposals and the critical need to ensure a stable flow of credit to the housing industry. On Feb. 17, NAHB's senior officers and staff met with FHA Commissioner David Stevens and staff from the White House National Economic Council and Treasury Department for the purpose of discussing the ramifications of the Administration's latest proposals on reforming America's housing finance system. They explained that NAHB's main goal in any proposal is to ensure there is an adequate supply of capital flowing to housing in ALL financial conditions and cycles — and we believe that the only way this can happen is to establish an explicit government backstop for the housing finance market.

Getting Heard

That same week, NAHB Chairman Bob Nielsen and First Vice Chairman Barry Rutenberg visited key members of the House and Senate. They transmitted our messages on the need to improve the flow of credit for housing production; the critical importance of housing tax incentives such as the mortgage interest deduction and Low Income Housing Tax Credit; and the necessity of providing a federal backstop for the housing finance market. Among others, they visited with House Financial Services Chairman Spencer Bachus (R-Ala.) and Ranking Member Barney Frank (D-Mass.); Sen. Majority Whip Richard Durbin (D-Ill.); House Minority Whip Steny Hoyer (D-Md.); and House Majority Whip Kevin McCarthy (R-Calif.). If you would like additional information, you can contact Michael Strauss with NAHB at 1-800-368-8400 extension 8252.

If one of those topics doesn't strike a chord with you, you must be in a different industry!

Now, when you hear from builders that are not a member of our fine association, please ask what they are doing to ensure the flow of credit...

See you in the trenches! **OB**



ONB Bank

Member Central Bancompany

See Barbara Franks for competitive construction loans in your area

ONB Bank

623 S. Main Street
Stillwater, OK 74074

405-707-8039

www.onbbank.com



Associates Council Chair Report

Casey Felix

Where Does the Time Go?



Wow, where does the time go? It seems like only yesterday we were each installed as the 2011 officers, and now we're a fourth of the way through the year! The Associates Council met before the Spring Board meeting to discuss upcoming events and get updates from around the state. From the information gathered from the area reports, everyone seems to be busy gearing up for home shows and parades of homes tours. All reports shared a similar tone of stable or growing environments from around the state, which is great news!

Upcoming Events

You're not going to want to miss the upcoming events for the Associates Council! We will be hosting our Silent Auction and Table Top again at the summer convention on

July 14-16 in Durant, OK. Both events will be held simultaneously on Friday night of the convention. This gives everyone a chance to visit with vendors and browse for gifts! Vanessa and Donna are our chairs again this year, so if you would like to participate by providing something for the auction or if you wish to be a table top vendor, contact these ladies for more information. The more money raised, the more education we can help give.

In case you're not familiar with the Associates Council's scholarship program, we have been providing scholarships to vocational schools across the state along with adding money to our endowments at OSU and OU universities. The funds raised from these events determine how much each school receives.

I look forward to seeing everyone this summer at the convention in Durant! **OB**



President of OSHBA Women's Council

Barbara J. Franks

Politics, Education and Other Benefits



First, a big "Thank You" to everyone that came to the State Capitol on March 22 for Legislative Day. Our numbers made a big impression on our legislators, and they realize, even more than ever, Oklahoma State Home Builders Association is involved in the political arena and we are paying attention. Our industry is very important to us and we are going to do all we can to help it thrive.

Education

OPWB continues to be involved in sponsoring continuing education for all OSHBA members. Please check the OSHBA website often for updates on classes being held statewide. New classes are added all year long and most details are on the web at www.oshba.org. Another advantage of being a member of OPWB is possible discounts and/or drawings for scholarships to some of the classes being offered. As special perks are available for our members, they will be included in the class information online.

Jack Werner is presenting most of the classes we offer. He is a NAHB approved instructor, has taught classes all over the nation, and is available for a wide range of classes. If there is a specific class you need, please get with Mike Means or me and we will try to help.

Professional Development

PWB nationally is also working on professional development for our members. Free webinars are going to be held quarterly, including a New Member Orientation, Social Networking and many more. There is also a new segment on LinkedIn called "Ask an Expert" that features experts giving you advice on different topics. These are excellent benefits that we receive just by being members! Be sure to get on nahb.org and go to the Professional Women in Building section for more information.

If you know of anyone interested in joining our group, please contact the state office, Kimmi Houston or me, and we will be glad to get you the information. Enjoy your spring and let's get some houses sold! **OB**

OSHBA Summer Convention

July 14-16 • Choctaw Casino Resort, Durant OK



OKLAHOMA GREEN BUILDING SUMMIT 2011

3rd Annual Green Building Summit
September 27-28, 2011
The Reed Center, Midwest City



Featuring Joe Lstiburek

Are You Fully Prepared to Take Advantage of a Stabilizing Market?

by John Barrows, CGB, GMB, CGP, president of J. Barrows Inc.

Many builders and remodelers have said that this recession is different, and that may well prove to be true. But there is one similarity between this and every recession that has preceded it.

Like all the others, there will be a recovery — and that can mean opportunity if you are prepared to take advantage of it.

Some core problems will remain as the recovery progresses — a lack of financing, poor buyer credit, excess inventory, sales of existing homes through foreclosure — and these will affect this industry in the foreseeable future.

In order to capitalize on the recovery, start looking at what you did to save your business as the recession deepened.

Many of you streamlined your operations, eliminated personnel and evaluated your products and their costs. You even may have diversified into remodeling, commercial work, energy-efficient retrofits, weatherization or another industry-related business.

Evaluate all the changes made, measure their success and effectiveness and use that knowledge to prepare your business for the future.

Streamline Your Operations

As businesses downsize, they often consider automating some of their processes. Automation can have a long-lasting, positive impact on your business — if done correctly. Keep in mind, though, that when implemented incorrectly, automating procedures merely replicates mistakes faster and more frequently — often without being noticed.

Therefore, it is imperative that you fully understand whatever aspects of your business you decide to automate before you implement your new processes. Successful automated systems delegate routine and repetitive tasks, enabling staff members to do what they do best — solve problems, work with clients and provide exemplary service.

Three systems that are often overlooked when streamlining operations but that can have a profound effect on your business success include:

- **Estimating:** Builders often fail to recognize that the best part of an estimating system is its job-cost system. How can an automated estimating system be beneficial if it's not routinely checked against actual costs? Failing to check variances on each project will only result in the same mistakes becoming part of every new job moving forward. Every estimate needs to be checked at the close of each job for accuracy against actual costs. Your estimates need to mirror the job-cost system and vice-versa.

Although many qualified people have been laid off and are looking for work, you should begin your search by carefully evaluating where you need help.

- **Purchase Orders:** Too many in the industry consider purchase orders to be unnecessary paperwork. A successful purchase order system does more than merely order materials and work — it validates your estimates. All materials and work should come directly from the estimate, and additional materials or work orders should be flagged as a variance. Reviewing the variance purchase orders on a regular basis can help you illuminate errors in your estimates and change orders. Purchase orders can also automate your record keeping — and personally save you time. For example, the materials and work will assign job cost codes automatically per your estimate and therefore will be accounted for properly. You then can easily assign someone on staff to match invoices to the proper purchase orders, which will free you from having to cost-code invoices at the end of each month. With these processes in place, you will only directly have to attend to a few purchase orders each month.

- **Scheduling:** All too often builders and remodelers fall into the trap of thinking that one more job during a given time can make them more profitable. The reality, however, is that the additional job can cause inefficiency, lost time, lost profits and poor customer relationships. The goal for any business actually should be to do more jobs over a given period of time by increasing the efficiency and speed, or velocity, of your projects. A well-thought-out schedule that is continually monitored and has achieved buy-in from your team will increase that needed velocity. In the process, you will increase profits and customer satisfaction.

Take the time now to evaluate your automated estimating, purchase order and scheduling processes to make sure that they are being implemented properly. Deploying just one of these systems effectively will increase your efficiency. Deploying all three will assure you that, as your work increases, projects will be completed efficiently, profitably and with increased customer satisfaction.

Solidify Your Hiring Practices

Deploying efficient, automated business operations systems will provide you a certain level of security as your workload increases, but at some point you will also need to add employees. Right now, as the industry begins to emerge from the downturn, you have a once-in-a-business cycle opportunity to find and employ the best key personnel for your company.

Although many qualified people have been laid off and are looking for work, you should begin your search by carefully evaluating where you need help. To do that, determine what you do best, what you don't like to do and where you can reap the most benefits by adding personnel.

Remember, your goal is to increase efficiency and simply adding people may not serve that purpose. Understanding your systems and how your processes work will help you define jobs and responsibilities. Detailed, written job descriptions and responsibilities will help you find the perfect fit.

Evaluate Your Products

When the market is good, it seems that whatever we build or remodel is successful. But when the market tanks, the reverse is also quite true.

But all is not bleak. There have been plenty of success stories during the last few years of builders and remodelers who have found the right blend between their product and consumer demand and satisfaction.

The key is to build what you know will sell, not what you think will sell. And to do that, you must identify what you do best, what consumers are demanding and how you can best satisfy that demand.

It stands to reason that what you do best will provide the most success because knowing where you excel is critical to selling yourself. Market research, either through a consultant or your own study, will illustrate how you can fit into what is selling in the market today. The goal is to find your niche and make the most of it.

First, determine the selling price comfort level of your target consumer. Working from there, deduct your desired margin. What you're left with is your cost of delivering that project.

All too often builders calculate in the opposite direction — to their detriment. They start with their product cost and

then add their markup. Not too surprisingly, when the job is completed they find themselves priced out of their target market because by customer move-in, with all the costs fixed, all they can do is cut their margin.

Evaluate Your Diversification

Many in the industry during the past few years diversified and tried just about anything to generate cash flow. Now, as markets improve and work becomes more plentiful, it's time to evaluate those business changes as well.

Determine if those diversified services you initiated will provide the necessary profit to continue them; if they will remain an integral part of your business or become a distraction as your core business improves; and if they will be a drain from your core business. Your answers should help you decide where to focus your business.

Remember, as the market and workflow improve, your goal is to work more efficiently and at a greater profit while building customer satisfaction. You cannot afford to blur your focus with products or operations that do not support those goals.

*John Barrows, CGB, GMB, CGP, is president of J. Barrows Inc., based in Wainscott, N.Y., a builder, remodeler and general contractor that also provides construction management and consulting services. Barrows is a nationally recognized author and speaker on green building, construction, production management and business management. For more information, e-mail Barrows, call him at 631-537-8734 or visit the J. Barrows website at www.buildersite.com. **OB***

National Association of Home Builders

Put your membership
to work now.

Money-saving discounts that benefit your
business, your employees, and your family

www.nahb.org/MA





Market Effectively, Efficiently With Automated Marketing

by Steve Lewkowitz

Tougher market conditions and tighter budgets have forced many companies to get innovative in order to do more with less. Now, as the industry slowly begins to return to health, these same innovations can help position builders, not just for survival, but for rapid growth as markets rebound.

The marketing landscape has changed dramatically in recent years. Traditional marketing channels, such as print advertising, have been supplanted by a range of different online marketing outlets — from social media to pay-per-click ads. Many companies have struggled to keep up with these changes.

Even those who have moved more of their marketing efforts online may not be taking full advantage of the opportunities to reduce costs and track performance, increasing — and monitoring — the return on investment (ROI) of their efforts.

Furthermore, taking advantage of the full potential of online channels and enabling technologies is not just about marketing online, it's also about leveraging electronic tools to streamline the generation and management of both online and offline leads.

It is not surprising, then, that there has been a recent surge of interest among home builders in marketing automation.

Marketing Automation in Broad Brush

Basically, marketing automation is all about doing more with less — conducting more marketing campaigns, reaching more prospects and collecting more leads while minimizing costs.

To accomplish that, marketing automation encompasses a variety of different kinds of technology solutions all designed to facilitate the planning, execution, management and tracking of marketing activities — from traditional print advertising to direct mail, e-mail, sales events and promotions.

For example, marketing automation can encompass event management solutions, e-mail and direct-mail applications, planning tools, marketing-analysis programs and more.

Ultimately, marketing automation is about incorporating a new set of tools to sell more homes faster — at a lower cost of sale.

Take Advantage of an Inexpensive Channel

Good marketing automation systems help builders and marketers manage and analyze the totality of their marketing initiatives, whether these include advertisements in print newspapers, glossy brochures sent by mail or in-person sales center events.

But one of the greatest advantages of automated marketing systems is that they enable builders to maximize the potential of the lowest-cost marketing channel — the Internet.

The Internet rapidly skyrocketed in its importance to the industry in just a few short years to the point where home builders today aren't just using the Internet for marketing because it's cost-effective, they're using it because the Internet is where the home buyers are.

Studies conducted for NAHB's Institute of Residential Marketing found that, not only did Internet-using consumers value online resources highly in their home buying search, they found them the most useful, most important resources they were most likely to use in future home searches.

When considered along with statistics from a study by the National Association of Realtors® indicating that 77 percent of home buyers use the Web when looking for a home, the picture is clear — builders who neglect or insufficiently utilize online channels are passing up an obvious and relatively inexpensive approach for reaching the majority of potential buyers in their market.

Nor is this push toward greater use of online channels driven purely by consumers; builders have reported that their best-quality leads find them on the Web.

Reaching More Home Buyers and Learning More About Them

The linchpin of marketing automation is e-mail marketing — a commu-

nication channel that allows builders to reach almost limitless numbers of potential customers without increasing costs.

With automated marketing systems, builders can create compelling, rich-media e-mail communications and customize them to reflect the recipient's name, location and interests. Plus, with a small investment in creating content tailored to specific preferences and conditions, home builders can design highly personalized campaigns that really connect with the buyer, increasing e-mail open rates and sales conversions.

This can be accomplished by installing simple forms on the builder's Web site or on kiosks at sales centers that allow for fast, easy collection of initial information about interested home buyers. Follow-up e-mails to the prospects who fill out the forms provide a perfect opportunity to gather further qualifying information in exchange for incentives and marketing collateral.

By using each touch-point as a chance to collect more detailed information about leads, home builders can avoid overwhelming prospective home buyers with a barrage of intrusive questions all at once — while also slowly building an ongoing relationship and valuable two-way exchange.

As builders learn more about buyer preferences and interests, they can use this information in tandem with marketing automation technology to further personalize communications.

For example, if a prospect has young children, the system can send useful information about the quality of neighborhood schools. Or, if a prospect is an avid golfer, the system can automatically send tantalizing descriptions of area golf courses.

As more in-depth information about prospects is gathered, increasingly sophisticated database segmentation can be performed, allowing for precise targeting of marketing initiatives.

Managing Leads More Effectively

During the housing boom, few builders complained about ineffectiveness of their marketing efforts. Instead, most builders were overwhelmed by a massive influx of leads from the Web and other sources, to

the point where they had had trouble effectively assembling, assessing and managing the leads.

In a hot market, builders may be able to get away with ineffective lead management, but in cooler times, mishandled leads can translate directly into lost sales. The fact is that, whatever the market condition, builders need reliable systems to help them prioritize and manage their leads.

The secret to cementing marketing's importance in home sales is to create a fluid process that integrates marketing directly with the sales team. Builders can close the loop between marketing and sales — and ensure consistent lead follow-up — by implementing marketing automation systems that include robust lead management functionality.

With marketing automation systems, home builders can define criteria, such as readiness to buy and financial preparedness, that can be used to automatically qualify and classify leads as they come in. If further information is required to qualify the lead, follow-up e-mails can be automatically triggered to complete the lead classification.

Once the leads are classified, they can be immediately funneled into an appropriate chain of activity — with hot leads assigned directly to the appropriate home sales consultants according to territory, specialization or other parameters the builder establishes, and longer-term leads assigned to automated communications based on their particular classification and attributes.

This process ensures the most efficient use of every sales consultant's time, while also guaranteeing that, rather than ignoring cooler leads, builders can nurture them by placing them on an appropriate path of communication until they are ready to make a purchase.

With marketing automation, the often labor-intensive and error-prone steps of lead qualification, distribution and nurturing is now a thing of the past as it makes way for work-free, automated processes that advance consistency and free up your sales consultants' time to focus on the best leads.

Measuring Marketing Success

An essential part of closing the loop between marketing and sales is to be

able to accurately track the results of marketing initiatives. Marketing automation systems typically allow builders to track a range of useful metrics about campaigns — open rates, response rates, sales conversions and more.

Sophisticated systems not only enable builders to track projected and actual campaign costs, but also to assign a persistent lead source designation to an individual, allowing builders to reliably trace customers back to marketing activities and to track the lifetime revenues associated with them. This provides the information required to accurately report on success rates and ROI.

There's No Time Like the Present

Marketers generally don't begin to think seriously about ROI and efficiency until budgets are slashed. Marketing automation can be invaluable to help marketers do more with less when times are tough.

But as markets pick up, marketing automation tools are indispensable in helping builders manage volume, streamline operations and measure performance, alleviating a lot of manual processes and freeing marketers to think more creatively.

Strategic-thinking builders invest in solutions that will help them realize immediate returns while also equipping them to more effectively deal with future market changes — whether good or bad.

As builders consider areas for greater efficiency and cost cutting and look to market smarter, marketing automation and lead management systems offer an attractive area for exploration.

Steve Lewkowitz is the professional services director at CDC Software, providers of Pivotal CRM for home building and real estate. For more information, e-mail Lewkowitz, or call him at 732-297-4060.

This article was first published in one of NAHB's Biztools three builder business guides, a compilation of articles gathered under three themes — business management, financial management and information technology published every year and free to members. To download the guides, visit www.nahb.org/bbg. **OB**



Elite Quality Homes

Brenda Love puts her knowledge and experience to use to build homes she can be proud of.

by Stacey Tetloff

Brenda Love started a career in architecture and engineering, joining a firm in 1971. In 1987, Love founded her own architectural firm in Fort Smith, Arkansas. The firm's clients included three corporate companies, with projects all over the United States, including one out of Atlanta.

When Love decided she didn't want to continue to travel, she started a design build company, moving the operation to Oklahoma City in 1999. For the first three years, Love and her business partner built mostly entry level housing, transitioning over to Elite Quality Homes in 2001.

Know the Industry

A background in architecture and engineering gave Love the insight she needed into building codes and understanding framing to create a successful homebuilding business. In addition to that extensive knowledge, Love is a Certified Builder with the Oklahoma State Home Builders Association, and is a Certified Green Professional. Love stays on top of industry education by maintaining the educational requirements needed each year to keep those certifications.

Love's knowledge and experience help her handle the business end of the company, including all of the finances. She is also on hand to work directly with the customers to create the plans for the home and make the design decisions. The company also benefits from the knowledge and expertise of Victor Squicimari

and Bill Stewart. Squicimari is the vice president of the business, handling all of the sales of the company as well as advertising and promotions. Stewart is the construction manager, managing all of the construction in the field.

Have a Little Faith

Today, Elite Quality Homes continues to build homes that are primarily in the 1,800 sq. ft. to 4,000 sq. ft. range, although with the current economy the company has built as small as 1,100 sq. ft. Love explained, "It just depends on what is out there. With the different economy, all builders have had to change their business, including adding in remodeling." It also includes where the company builds. Elite Quality Homes typically builds on south side of Oklahoma City, but has built in northeast Oklahoma City and in Norman, as well as to the west, in the past 12 months. "We've expanded our horizons because of the economy. When customers ask us to build outside of our usual area, we do," Love said.

The recent economic downturn has definitely presented the homebuilding industry with challenges. According to Love, however, things are better in Oklahoma for builders.

As of January 2011, the unemployment rate in Oklahoma City was reported at 6.3 percent, lower than the 9 percent national average or the 6.6 percent Oklahoma state average. The challenge is to help potential home buyers, especially first-time buyers, to overcome their fears and anxiety over the negative outlook on the economy. Part of that confidence



should come from the interest rate, explained Love. "There's no better time to buy a house than right now. It's amazing what kind of home you can buy with today's low interest rates. People have to have faith that it's safe to buy a house, in spite of what we hear on the news," she said.

Negative press has affected buyer confidence, but Love noted that the activity in home buying has started to turn around. "We've seen a lot more activity this year, and a lot of people are ready to buy and need to buy," she said.

Be Proud of What You Do

Love's company places the highest priority on building quality homes from the best materials. The goal is to create a home that is as maintenance-free as possible and to make homeowners happy. Of the company's customers in 2010, 65 percent were repeat customers, or the friends or family members of a previous customer. "That's what we've worked for," Love explained. "We don't depend totally on advertisements. We get referrals by always doing a good job on our homes and placing emphasis on customer service. It's important to walk away from a home that we've built and be proud of it."

Whether building a home for a baby boomer looking to retire or a first-time home buyer in their early twenties, Love gets enjoyment out of seeing the excitement when the homes are completed, and seeing the anticipation of the homeowners to live in a new, healthy and safe home.

"When I was younger, I thought you had a job and worked for money. But, as you get older, real enjoyment comes from having a career and enjoying it. I enjoy driving buy and saying, 'I did that.' I'm able to do that every time I drive by a home we've built," Love explained.

Don't Forget the Necessities

Love is current president of the Southwest Home Builders Association and serves on the state board of directors for the Oklahoma State Builders Association.

Membership and involvement in the builders associations is an absolute necessity as far as Love is concerned. "It's your responsibility to be involved," she said. The homebuilders associations provide support and supervision of the building industry, educating the public, government and builders. "In the HBAs, we have widely supported the Certified Builder program, which brings credibility and responsibility to every builder and to the industry as a whole," Love explained. In addition, the homebuilders associations are instrumental in giving back to the community, something Love also strongly believes in. "The Moore Home Builders Association refills backpacks with food for children who would not otherwise eat over the weekend," she said. The Southwest HBA supports and gives \$5,000 every year to the Red Cross. The list goes on, and Love cannot stress the importance of the homebuilders associations enough.

In addition to education and community involvement, the influence of the associations in the political realm of building is also a necessity. "I believe in the Build PAC program," Love said. Build PAC supervises the laws that are being passed, supporting candidates that support the building industry. As Love explained, "Build PAC keeps an eye on the issues that will affect everyone, from builders to homeowners."

To view some of Elite's products, visit www.elitequalityhomes.com, or contact Brenda at elitequalityhome@aol.com. **OB**

FITZHUGH'S

PEST MANAGEMENT SERVICES

Licensed & Insured • Family Owned & Operated
One of Oklahoma's Largest Termite Pre-Treat Companies

P.O. Box 271563
OKC, OK 73137

(405) 688-8400
fax (405) 688-8555

<p style="font-style: italic; font-size: 1.2em;">Performance Plus Mechanical, LLC</p>	
<p>Residential & Commercial Plumbing New Construction • Remodel • Repair 24-Hour Emergency Service</p>	
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <p>Augie Willige Office: (405) 801-2992</p> <p>Dusty Willige Fax: (405) 701-1406</p> </div>	
<p>OK License #1782 Bonded & Insured www.performanceplusmechanical.com</p>	



By All Means: Executive Officer's Report

Mike Means

Power of Involvement

Iwould like to talk about the power of involvement this issue. And by involvement I mean the engagement of a member into the workings of the association of which they are a member.

I recently read a quote from a school teacher about involvement. She said, "So often as educators we focus on only one of the sensory learning areas whether it be only visual, auditory, or tactile. I believe that we must involve all of our sensory areas in the learning experience. Children not only need hands-on experiences, but minds-on experiences as well. To involve students in such a way means to be an involved educator. I have made a commitment to involve my students, as well as myself, in the learning environment."

Where am I going with this? If you are a member of a professional organization — say for instance your local HBA — and you aren't participating in General Membership events, Home and Garden Shows, Parade of Home events, or clicking your mouse in answer to a *legislative action alert*, then you are not involved. But if you are involved, then you are witnessing the power of involvement.

What are the benefits that come from power of involvement? The best example I can give is our annual Capitol Day at the Oklahoma State Capitol. The power of involvement is having a legislator listen to a homebuilder's concern and make a commitment to do something. The power of involvement is when three or four members gather together and impress on a legislator that the issue is bigger than he or she



initially thought. The power of involvement is to truly make a difference for your industry.

So, armed with this knowledge, what will you do? My hope is that you will realize a benefit of membership comes from being involved and bringing the power of involvement to your business and to your professional development.

A Real Example

An example of mutual benefit that came from the power of involvement happened recently in my own personal sphere. I sit on the board for my church's camp. I believe in outdoor ministry and we have been working on improving the facility for quite some time. Since we are not tied directly to any congregation, it has been challenging to raise the funds to build a new building. We want to build a retreat quad-cabin.

Well, due to the involvement of a member who recently joined the association, we are building our first new building in 50 years! We didn't think it would be possible due to the cost. But then I thought, why not ask a home builder to build it? It may be considered light commercial, but it is essentially a home.

Rich Looper, a builder in our Greater Sequoyah County Chapter, worked with us on the construction of this building. The picture you see above is at our groundbreaking. That is the power of involvement in action!

Until next time... **OB**

State Homebuilders visit Congressmen Durning NAHB Leg-Con



Attending the Leg-Con was president Michael Herndon, PWB chair Kimmi Hoiuston, Ken Klein, Phil Rhees, and Mike Means.





Industry Knowledge



More than 35 years of experience in your industry allows CFR to understand your business. ***CFR is the only insurance program endorsed by the Oklahoma State Home Builders Association.*** We have the right tools to make sure you are properly covered:

- Builders Risk
- Auto
- General Liability
- Umbrella
- Workers Compensation

CFR, Inc.

5314 S. Yale, Ste. 900
Tulsa, OK 74135
918.747.8631

5600 N. May, Ste. 270
Oklahoma City, OK 73112
405.841.0100

Bob Kenney
Mark Priess

Bob Mathis

Larry Halve
Justin Wimberley

TruWood®
SIDING | TRIM

MOST BUYERS DON'T ASK FOR SIDING BY BRAND.

TO THEM, SIDING IS SIDING. UNLESS, OF COURSE, THEY HAPPEN TO BE LOOKING AT A HOME WITH

SIDING THAT MAKES THAT HOME DISTINCT. THAT MAKES IT DIFFERENT FROM THE HOUSE NEXT DOOR

AND THE HOUSE DOWN THE STREET. IN WHICH CASE, SIDING IS THEN MORE THAN JUST SIDING.

IT'S A SELLING POINT. TRUWOOD. THEY'RE ASKING FOR IT, EVEN IF THEY DON'T KNOW IT BY NAME.

www.TruWoodSiding.com | **ASK US ABOUT OUR FSC PRODUCTS.**

The TruWood Collection, manufactured by Collins Products LLC | phone 1.800.417.3674

TruWood's material content is backed by
third-party certifier Scientific Certification Systems.
SCS-MC-01178 | www.scs-certified.com

