

CASE STUDY: ARBOR BUILDERS

Future Proofing its Technology, Preparing for Growth

In the Pacific Northwest, Arbor Builders is easily the region's most forward-thinking, "future proofed" home builder. The company, based in Bend, Oregon, is led by a savvy entrepreneur, Jason Adams. He is a young man focused on steady growth, but he's probably more unique because of his uncanny knack for acquiring and implementing the technology that makes his growth so profitable.

In 2015, Arbor Builders will start 25 homes. They sell in the \$235,000 to \$465,000 range, with homes ranging in size from 1,300 to 2,100 square feet. For Arbor Builders, which offers 10 models and an increasing number of options, 25 starts is just a stop in the elevator ride up to 40, 50, 60 starts that Adams is gunning for in the immediate future. For staff, Arbor Builders runs lean with just nine employees, including a full-time drafter, a project manager, a super, two assistant supers and a licensed realtor.

An even more remarkable feature of Arbor Builders is that it is putting in place software solutions now that can accommodate ten times its 2015 start volume.

Arbor Builders

- 25 Starts (up to 2,100 sq. ft.)
- 9 Employees
- 10 Models

Software:

- BuilderMT WMS
- Sales Simplicity
- Microsoft NAV

"We really wanted to be positioned for growth with technology that lets us focus on what we are good at: home building. The last thing we want is to get to 50 or 60 starts and scramble to get software to manage that start volume," Adams said. "We needed software that we can grow into, so our workflows, accounting and sales can be tracked and optimized."

"Another reason we are making the move with new software is because the posture of our business is changing. We are starting to add more options, and we needed systems in place to track them, make sure they were priced properly and make sure we have a careful assignment as to which option got sold with which house," Adams added. "Recently, options have been a real bugaboo for us. In fact, in our first eight homes with buyer-selected options, we did not install the options correctly. That's a real profit killer, when you have to replace a floor or install AC that wasn't installed to

match the sales contract, so we're looking to a new sales system to track that process for us."

"Get Out of QuickBooks, We Have to Run Checks!"

For new software, Arbor Builders decided to bring in the big guns. The reason? Adams knows the value of managing data and keeping it in order.

"My grand father was an accountant. My father was an accountant, and I've got a strong interest in accounting. I also have a business degree," Adams said. "But at my age, given the world I've grown up in, I have a different expectation of what software can do for me than, say, a builder in his 50s or 60s. Sometimes I see practices that make me chuckle. For instance, we were told a story of a large builder near us that was running a 50-start business on QuickBooks. But the database was so taxed, they had to have everyone back out of the system whenever the company has to run checks! Someone would get on the intercom and say, "Everyone off of QuickBooks!" Imagine the loss in productivity. Other builders I know are manually keying repetitive data into spreadsheets, which increases the opportunities for errors. That kind of thing drives me nuts. We were determined to implement software to prevent that and prepare us for any previously-unimaginable future."

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Software Selection: Positioned for Growth

To manage their construction workflows – everything from scheduling and work orders, to purchase orders and trade portals – the Company is implementing BuilderMT's Workflow Management Suite (WMS).

For accounting, Arbor is implementing Microsoft NAV. It's a powerful accounting package, and Adams likes it because it can manage anything he throws at it from his home building business, plus the data from other business enterprises in which Adams is involved. The Microsoft NAV solution is being implemented by a BuilderMT partner company, Western Computer, an accounting specialist in the home building sector. (Arbor Builders had been on Sage, but Adams saw very quickly that he'd "max it out" with what he wanted to do.)

For CRM and sales, Arbor is implementing Sales Simplicity. “In Sales Simplicity, we see a way to manage our contracts and options, something we are eager to get control over,” Adams said. “What’s best is that these systems – BuilderMT, Sales Simplicity and Microsoft NAV – are all pre-integrated; they all talk to each other and data flows from one to the other as if they were a single system.”

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“Make no mistake, this is a large investment in technology for a company our size,” Adams explains. “But, coming out of the recession, I was committed to building an efficient operation and not just a big operation. Bend, Oregon saw the great appreciation of home values nationally...and then the nation’s greatest depreciation. (I know of one lot that was purchased for \$220,000 at the top and sold for \$37,000 at the bottom!) But we focused on being highly efficient and highly innovative and held on. We were able to keep our heads above water. We kept our credit and good name, and I decided that once

things ticked up, we’d invest in world-class technology. At the end of the day, it’s really about enabling us to stop putting out fires, and instead focus on our mission: to be the builder of choice for our customers, vendors, employees and community. What’s that worth to our brand? To our future? The value is many times over what we paid for software, believe me.”

Challenges for the Future

“We feel as though we have a really good handle on our operations with these software systems in place,” Adams said. “So, our challenge is no longer to keep up with the operational paperwork. We’re ready for growth of our core competencies. Now we can focus on what’s really important: Taking care of our employees with incentives, finding land, lining up financing, designing and selling great homes, and making customers happy with high-quality products. That’s what I call success.”

About Arbor Builders

In the Bend, Oregon region, Arbor Builders has a well-earned reputation for quality and on-time performance. One of the fastest growing and most innovative home builders in the region, Arbor Builders builds pre-sold, “spec” and customizable homes, all built to the exacting standards and high expectations of its buyers. Learn more: arbor-builders.com.

About BuilderMT

For the home building industry at large, BuilderMT provides highly-customizable workflow and building-process-management software that works in tandem with leading accounting systems and other wireless and jobsite productivity tools, such as CRM and warranty management. For 15 years, BuilderMT systems have been purchased by nearly 900 home builders and cumulatively used as a desktop workflow tool by upwards of ten thousand home building professionals. BuilderMT is widely recognized as a leader in process-driven, best-building-practices for builders, as well as customer service, warranty applications, online training and innovative wireless applications. To learn more, visit www.BuilderMT.com, or call (888) 757-1991 ext. 271.

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