CASE STUDY: TIM O'BRIEN HOMES

With BuilderMT, Tim O'Brien Homes Can Add 20% More Starts Over and Above Their Current Volume Without Adding a Single Operations or Construction Management Staff Person

Founded in 2007, after large production builders left the Milwaukee area, Tim O'Brien Homes builds ~3,000 sq. ft. homes that range in price from $280,000 to $320,000. All homes have access to an options selection program that offers allowances ranging from $20,000 to $60,000/home. The Company will start 150 homes in Milwaukee in 2015. (There is another full division of the company in Madison, WI.)

With a fabulous reputation for quality, achieved in just seven short years of operations, Tim O'Brien Homes builds in six communities, and staffs with a lean team of two people in accounting, one in architectural services, four in purchasing, six supers, seven in sales, two to manage options, two in the back office, and three in customer care. There are also two owners. (All construction is subcontracted.)

The Company is highly sophisticated with advanced software, which automates all sales and construction processes, allowing for an extremely lean staff. To manage operations, the Company runs the entire BuilderMT Workflow Management Suite, as well as Sales Simplicity, Sage Accounting, and CG Visions. With the addition of BuilderMT's Trade Portal and Superintendent Portal, all affiliated trades and construction managers have unrivaled access to the lot-specific information in a largely paperless environment, further allowing for reduced staff, and the opportunity for Tim O'Brien Homes to expand its start volume, if it so desired, by another 20% without adding a single new person for operations and construction management.

Tim O'Brien Homes

- Founded in 2007
- 2015 starts: 150
- Average home size: 3,000 sq. ft.
- Price range: $280,000 to $320,000.
- Options value: $20,000 to $60,000/home
- Milwaukee-based staff:
  - » Two in accounting
  - » One in architectural services
  - » Four in purchasing
  - » Six supers
  - » Seven in sales
  - » Two to manage options
  - » Two in the back office
  - » Three in customer care

Software:

- BuilderMT Workflow Management Suite
- Sales Simplicity
- Sage Accounting
- CG Visions
- Avid Ratings

BuilderMT Portal Technology to the Rescue

Recently, Tim O'Brien Homes needed to add more efficiently convey to its 60 trades (drywall, carpet, painting, plumbing, framing, etc.) information on a lot-specific level. If a trade rolled up to a job site and wanted to start work, how would they know the color and material selection? And even if the trade knew about job specifics, what if the buyer had changed their minds on the position of a sink, or the number of dormers, or bath tile colors. And what if the schedule had changed, and the framers couldn't start because the foundation wasn't ready, or the lumber had not arrived? Until the recent implementation of an innovative technology, it was a paper-intensive and error-prone operation, where mistakes were potentially very costly. Worse, the Company's staff had been besieged by phone calls and requests for information from as many as 60 trades, across 150 starts.

Moreover, invoicing was paper-based as well, and that presented its own nightmare, as invoices had to be tracked, and questions answered as to when checks were mailed and to whom. And then there were the variance purchase orders, which could really muck up what processes were in place.

To top it off, all these potential problems experienced by trades were also experienced by the company superintendents. They also needed up-to-date, lot-specific information, so they would know what to ask for, and what to inspect/check off and approve for payment.

Tim O'Brien Homes already used BuilderMT, and they added two new modules, which are cloud-based "portals," called Trade Portal and Superintendent Portal. The Company was so confident that Trade Portal and Superintendent Portal would solve problems that it bought the 60 trades ALL of their required software licenses! (Portals can be accessed with iPads, Tablets, PC, or any browser.)

How the Portal Performs

Specifically, Trade Portal allows Tim O'Brien Homes to share real-time workflow data with its trades. Trade Portal maintains a single database / single location for all schedules, workflow management, and transactions, and the trades can access that workflow, and view detailed information about purchase orders, work orders, schedules, warranty, and payment status through any web browser.

With Trade Portal, each trade partner has a unique web site that accesses a record of their activity. A customizable

"dashboard" showcases any builder updates or events that affect the sub or trading partner, while also offering a portal for best-practice sharing, company news, and events. Every Trade Portal uniquely provides secure viewing screens that offer critical data for individual trade partners, such as approved, issued, or cancelled purchase orders and event schedules that can be viewed by projected, schedule, or completion dates.

Schedule notifications can be automatically triggered through the Trade Portal's scheduling tool and delivered to any individual web portal or redirected by the builder or trade to an email box or wireless device. Superintendent Portal, on the other hand, offers a similar wealth of information, and supers share schedules, purchase orders, transactions, sub's transactions, job alerts, and more…all from one web-based location.

With Superintendent Portal, a customizable "dashboard" presents updates or events that affect the Super, with visibility to such information as approved, issued, or cancelled purchase orders, all of which can be viewed by project, schedule, or completion dates. Schedule notifications can be automatically triggered through the Superintendent Portal's scheduling tool. Superintendent Portal is also integrated into BuilderMT's Workflow Management Suite.

Process Improvements, Staff Cheers

Can you hear it? An enormous sigh of relief! That's the sound the staff makes each day, knowing that they are not in the document management business, and not in the business of answering frantic phone calls and putting out fires: They can do what they were hired to do, and that's sell and build high-quality homes, delivered on time to delighted customers. With so much information available to the trades, and supers, the staff isn't constantly leaping into the breach to look for a missing purchase order, track a check, or run out to the site with a variance purchase order because a buyer changed their mind at the last minute on the bathroom wall colors. It's all on the Portals. And it's been a liberating experience for the staff, driving up morale and driving down frustration.

Quantifiable Benefits

Dan Gorski, VP of Purchasing and Design for Tim O'Brien Homes, is able to run an extremely lean staff, given their start volume and the kinds of homes they build. Dan feels that the Company can –amazingly – add 20% start volume over and above their current levels without adding a single operations or construction management staff person.

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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