

CRM Helps Keep “Customers for Life”



Today leading developers and marketing and sales organizations are using software technology to sell their real estate faster (with controlled velocity) and improve their revenue and margins. Along the way, they are also building professional long lasting relationships with their prospective buyers and homeowners.

This technology, commonly called Customer Relationship Management (CRM) software, is designed for the sell side of the real estate industry. There has never been a better time to investigate and implement CRM for your business. Why? There are four primary reasons:

- Rapid advances in technology
- Software designed specifically for real estate
- The value proposition is staggering
- CRM benefits everyone on your team

Technology has made great leaps forward in the past several years because of the Internet. Today, most leading applications are written to be accessed over the Internet and to be used on-demand as needed. The

benefit is CRM has become economical to implement as no expensive hardware infrastructure is needed and the software can be deployed rapidly; often in a matter of a few days rather than weeks or months! Another important advantage is that the software will not become obsolete as new features, enhancements and releases are commonly included in the monthly usage fees.

In past years, CRM software was quite generic and typically required lots of customization (and expense) for the user. Today's software, which eliminates the need for extensive customization, should be easy to use and must complement or mirror the business processes and terminology of the real estate industry. It needs to work the way you do!

So what about the value proposition and the financial return? The financial benefit of choosing the right CRM solution can be extraordinary. The cost of software licensing and implementation is usually less than the price of a full-page advertisement in a mid-sized city newspaper. The value is based on selling out projects and communities sooner (with controlled velocity), managing margins with timely release of inventory and price revisions, plus reducing administrative and rework at all levels. Managers, executives and owners get comprehensive, accurate and up-to-the-moment information needed to coach and lead for success. Plus, the prospect and homeowner database becomes an invaluable business asset for current and future projects and communities.

A great CRM solution will deliver high value for everyone on the team — marketing, sales, sales management, administration, customer service and executives.

It is a well known statistic that over 75% of prospective purchasers utilize the Internet prior to purchasing a home. So the relationship with the prospect, more often than not, begins at the project Web site registration page, making it essential for builders to

choose an advanced CRM system. A good CRM system will automatically deliver auto reply emails to prospects that are personalized to their specific details and preferences; build momentum with prospects by creating ongoing memorable communication via polished HTML emails that include your project theme, logos, home features, and lifestyle imagery and do targeted campaigns by market segmentation and demographics (city, zip code, age, interests, etc.). In addition, it should track advertising expenditures versus traffic at sales centers to pinpoint which publications best deliver prospects and purchasers.

CRM technology will help sales people make more money and be more productive by accelerating sales velocity and improving their close ratios. Top sales people embrace CRM as it allows them to work smarter rather than harder while serving their prospects and homeowners in a professional manner.

Many CRM systems automatically route and assign prospect lead information to the sales person home page or “dashboard” which makes it easy for them to follow up leads with more enthusiasm and consistency. This dashboard becomes the control center for the sales person’s daily activities and includes calendar, activity and contact management. It also records all prospect contact history (emails, calls and reminders). In addition, some systems have an ‘online availability board’ that displays up to the minute deal status by unit, including what inventory is available, reserved, in offer or escrow. Because the software is web based, sales people can communicate and be responsive to their customers from the sales or call center, from home or while on vacation.

Sales managers can better direct, follow up and coach their sales teams for success because they gain the visibility to view all sales agents by their activities, appointments, prospect rating and other key performance indicators. During peak sales times managers can improve profit by adjusting unit invento-

ry prices in real-time; with automatic updates to the availability board. Managers can also view online up to the moment Traffic, Sales, Deposit, Escrow, Commission, and other reports that support good decision making and tactical actions.

For administrators, it is amazing how much time can be saved by eliminating manual processes and duplicate entry into disparate spreadsheets. Costly errors and omissions are minimized or eliminated because administrators can view and prepare all purchaser activity and purchase agreements from a central database. Plus they can track and report on inventory and unit pricing, deposits, escrow, and revenue status. Even the tedious and time consuming process of updating all addresses on the purchaser move in date can be eliminated with the click of a button.

Some CRM systems have a deficiency management module that helps quality control and customer service personnel reduce the number of deficiencies and resolution time prior to homeowner orientation and occupancy. It is also possible to pinpoint trade involvement by category of deficiency to isolate and further reduce costs. It all adds up to a more satisfied homeowner and even more customer referrals.

My experience in working with executives and owners over the years is that they want relevant, accurate, timely, and comprehensive information (rather than just data). CRM systems that are custom-built for real estate offer comprehensive summary reports on critical business information that in turn support informed decisions for today and tomorrow.

Busy executives need real-time access to information and reporting should be at their fingertips, anywhere in the world. If your current technology does not deliver what you need, find the CRM system that helps you sell faster, for more money, and keep your customers for life. **SMI**