

Technology has entered most of our lives as a dominant force, for example where would the world of publishing and a game of journalistic pursuit be without it? The Escape; that highly sort after equestrian community springing up beside the Emirates Road in Ajman, is no different in that respect, especially when it comes to managing and monitoring the client base. As an eloquent expression of life intermingled with horses, amidst a Byzantine architectural flavour, the development does require that extra level of finesse wouldn't you say? Thus in line with 'La Haute qualité environnementale' of the finishes to be applied to the residential elements in and amongst this developing world of steeds, stallions and mares; enter David Clements and LASSO Data Systems Inc.

Mr. Clements is the Canadian CEO of Lasso, hence my venture into descriptive French, for they speak more than a little of that Romance language over on the east side as it were, although somewhat far flung from LASSO's home town of Vancouver, British Columbia. On reflection, given The Escape's inherent Moorish Anadalousian overtones, a eulogy on the tiles would possibly be best served up in the Castilian- Mozarabic dialect of that region. Not forgetting the fact that Andalusians happen to be one of the oldest and finest breed of horse in the world.

However I digress, the application of technology to the benefit of the customer base at The Escape is where it all started and that is, despite the verbosity, the general direction in which I am heading. After all David Clements, also known as Dave, was generous enough to spare me his diary space.

Who, what and why is LASSO Data Systems Inc?

We are a technology software company who cater specifically for the real estate industry, with our headquarters in Canada. Back in 1990 my business partner was in the signage business which targeted the same industry. Looking at the market at the time, there were a number of developers

building towers in Vancouver who had no real capability to capture information about their client's buying habits, no real tools that enabled them to follow up sales leads in an efficient manner and people queuing up to purchase property in much the same way as the sector has developed here in the UAE. Therefore LASSO ended up designing an on-line sale and client data recording, customer service and management system, that took account of all the nuances of the real estate market and was also customizable to individual developer requirements. From 2002 we target marketed the applications product and in 2005, confident of the demand, launched across the whole of North America.

Moving forward from the 2005 launch how has the business developed?

We have implemented around 1,000 different projects to date on behalf of around 150 developers. The current list of 'active' projects amounts to 600, the residue being successfully completed. These cover multiple areas of activity from marketing and sales through to customer service, with the core software remaining the same all over the world but able to be customised to adopt local terminology. Customer facing relationship management is the essence providing what we would refer to as 'software-as-a-service' over the internet.

To what degree have you expanded the user base of your products outside North America?

Most certainly of the six hundred active projects that I mentioned, one hundred are located in the international



Dave Clements

Escape to smart service

By Andy McTiernan



Saddle Homes



Escape Mansion

arena i.e. outside Canada and the US. We have, for example, systems implementations in both Central and South America; at Hamptons in the United Kingdom; in India; and through Kingdom Hotel Investments in Saudi Arabia; the Raffles projects in Manila, Philippines; Da Nang in Vietnam and Praslin in the Seychelles.

You are now working with The Escape in Ajman?

"They actually found us appropriately enough via the web and, absolutely, we're really excited about our relationship with Equine Management Systems (EMS) and The Escape. Our objective is to create leading edge customer service coupled with comprehensive information supply to the buyers. This is known as the enterprise wide Customer Relationship Management (CRM) System and therefore from the moment a buyer signs a sales agreement they are utilising our software to create transparency, a case of complete customer 'glasnost' if you will."

What kind of information will you be gathering as far as the EMS implementation is concerned?

"Fundamentally we are providing a comprehensive data collection vehicle which will hold Customer base data. This will include: Buyer name, address, attributes, purchase detail, including assignment of the unit sold, deposit and payment schedule and Escrow details. We will create reservation and contract help records, including a history of all communications with the client. EMS is setting up a dedicated customer service team who will interact closely with all the buyers at The Escape and they will rely heavily on

the quality of information supply to deliver their expected service levels."

Could you describe the additional facilities that the LASSO application can offer besides pure data management and retrieval?

"Sure, the system can for instance link into the existing websites and even update those websites if required. The query and data extraction options are very powerful and to give an illustration, let us say, out of the 2,500 units that make up The Escape please extract all 400 purchasers of 'Saddle Homes' as there is a need to send them all a news update. We can do that without complication. Also, we are in the final stages of due diligence to establish a regional office and international support centre in the UAE, which will enhance our ability to deliver continually advancing product functionality quickly at a local level."



At what stage of the CRM implementation into EMS are you?

"Basically the system is working and we are in the process of fine tuning the methodology. The latter stage is important as, when the market is sizzling, service levels do not have the same influence as getting access to product, now everyone is having to work that much harder to win customers and maintain the relationship. Therefore, client managers have to have much more accountability and meet significantly elevated service level expectations. This makes rapid response a far more pressing requirement than perhaps it was before, especially as 80 per cent of the people planning to live at The Escape are end-users. That means that it is particularly important to inform people when things are happening, for example the site earthworks are complete, which they are!"

With Saddle Homes completely sold out, a scattering of villas possibly 20 per cent still to be sold and a crop of apartments to be launched in the New Year, The Escape has to maintain the standards to which we have become accustomed. Undoubtedly, the partnership between EMS and LASSO Data Systems resulting in the everyday utilisation of CRM technology will play a major part in achieving that particular element of quid pro quo. ²



Aerial View of Escape