



Reexamining Modular Homes

By Tim Watson

In the early 1900s, Sears Roebuck Co. found a unique niche in the real estate market with modular homes. The company's success began when returning soldiers from World War I sought opportunities to own the American Dream. However, a problem arose because demand was too high and construction for new homes was too slow. A solution came in the form of modular homes – a method of construction providing residences built faster and more efficiently. The homes, complete with parts and instructions, were shipped to eager homeowners ready to assemble.

Fast forward nearly 100 years and the modular home industry has significantly evolved from a post-war fad to an industry trend that is catching the eye of smart, eco-sensitive homebuyers. Today's modular home companies can build custom, multimillion-dollar homes that are environmentally friendly, energy-efficient and healthier for the homebuyer.

Many Realtors struggle when selling modular homes because they have little knowledge of the modular process and product. However, modular homes can increase your business and please your customers.

“Modular homes are changing the way people look at the homebuilding industry,” says John Ragland, executive vice president of acquisitions and marketing for Haven Custom Homes, a Baltimore-based company that has been building custom modular homes for more than 30 years. “And the benefits to homebuyers are tremendous. The custom homes

we create meet many green building standards and improve energy efficiency by up to 20 percent while still meeting the highest of design standards.”

So how do you pass this message on to your buyers? First, you must understand the process of building modular homes in a controlled environment. Depending on the modular company you and your buyer work with, the first step is selecting a home design.

Many companies offer preexisting floor plans that buyers can choose from, while custom home companies offer the option of creating a new plan specific to the buyer. Once the

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home is selected, the modular home company will begin construction of the home in a controlled facility. A skilled workforce will create the home using precision tooling that consistently creates straight walls, square corners, fitted windows and flat ceilings. The controlled environment protects the homes from weather, preventing warping, moisture damage and building delays. This building process allows homes to be delivered to the buyer three times faster than conventional

construction methods. Some of the best modular companies can have the home completed in the factory and ready to be delivered to the homesite within one week.

“You wouldn't want your car or your television to be built outside in inclement weather so why would you want your home to be built that way?” Ragland says. “To date, building in a state-of-the-art controlled facility is the most protected and efficient way to construct a home.”

Knowing the process of modular construction will help you translate the benefits to your customers. However, it is also important to understand the added, long-term benefits that homebuyers will experience with this construction technique. Here are the facts:

- Modular homes are of the same quality as traditional built homes, the only difference is they are constructed in a controlled facility where they are protected from weather damage, moisture and warping.
- Modular construction is faster than traditional construction methods. This significantly reduces construction financing costs to those seeking a custom home.
- Modular homes can be custom, high-end, multimillion-dollar homes. They are not the mobile homes on wheels your customers might imagine.
- Custom modular homes can be found in communities with the most demanding architectural standards in the United States, including the Hamptons, Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard.
- Modular homes must meet all state regulation codes before leaving the factory.
- Modular homes provide a reliable delivery date for homebuyers.
- Once completed and delivered to the homesite, the completion of a modular home can take as little as four to six weeks, resulting in less disruption and debris for neighbors in the community.
- Modular homes can be built to the highest green standards, enhancing the quality of life for homeowners and the environment.

Like any relationship you foster, it is important to do research and know the company you will be working with. Many modular builders offer facility site tours that allow you to experience and understand how the home is built. A good modular company will also provide educational materials and examples of its products.

The modular home industry is poised to be one of the fastest growing segments of the home buying industry and it's time to make sure you know the benefits and options that are available to your clients.

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