

Digital Tools: Satisfying Customers with Online Communication

Part two in our three-part series looking at how residential construction can leverage digital tools.

We'll take a look at how digital tools can keep businesses and their customers connected. From the sales presentation to the final payment, digital platforms and devices provide numerous avenues for building pros to maximize client satisfaction via communication.

Trust the Tablet

Ultimately portable, user-friendly, and able to hold and showcase all different types of assets, mobile tablet devices have become indispensable business tools in just a short time. While Apple doesn't release sales figures, as recently as 2016, reports indicated that as much as half of Apple's iPad sales were to businesses.

Content marketing platform Paperflite shares a guide of 10 ways to use iPads for sales enablement, and several of them are applicable to builders and remodelers, including:

- Field marketing, such as in-home sales or mall kiosk presentations.
- Trade-show booth presentations and event marketing.
- Taking point-of-sale orders, like letting customers put their deposit on a credit card right from the kitchen table after the sales presentation.

“When you showcase a product, along with a presentation, using a tablet, the visual impact of the product/service enhanced and customers can experience its multiple features and facets,” the company says. The sleek look of a tablet presentation also lets prospective customers know that your company is technologically up to date.

Portal Possibilities

With a solid digital presentation set up, once customers decide to invest in a project, builders and remodelers can continue to the digital relationship through online client portals. From online shopping to online bill-pay, most consumers are well immersed in the world of e-commerce and digital communication, so having a way for construction clients to access their project information online is an easy transition. In fact, a 2018 survey by Statista found that 88% of respondents “*expect* brands or organizations to have an online self-service support portal.”

Online customer portals can include everything from product selections and project schedules, to contract signatures, to work-in-progress photos. Florida-based homebuilder Frey & Sons implemented an online portal in 2018 with all of these features. “Having that level of transparency and communication with our clients is a key element of our business,” says President Barry Frey. “The customer portal is changing the game and making the ability to have full access to your project a reality, anywhere, anytime.”

For construction firms that have yet to implement an online portal, marketing agency Clutch offers insight into how to know when it’s time to add this level of customer-facing digital interaction.

“An effective customer portal can save your business time and money by automating processes like billing, scheduling, or online payments,” the firm says. “But the decision to invest in a customer portal should come from a desire to improve the customer experience.” They add that the decision of what type of portal to offer should match your business’s goals and your efforts to meet customers’ needs. For instance, if your existing project management software is working well for your business, see if they have an online portal feature that will integrate what you’re already doing with an improved customer-facing experience.