

TECHTOOLS

TECHNOLOGY FOR THE MODERN HOME BUILDER ■ EDITED BY STEVE ZURIER

Star Gazing

Constellation Home-Builder Systems plans to invest \$1.2 million over three years to launch a mobile device software division. The first product, OnLocation Schedule, is scheduling software for supers that runs on a BlackBerry. The initial release will be for NewStar users; additional mobile applications for executives and customer-care workers will follow. Visit www.constellationhb.com for more information.



Survey Says

Check out www.joeturner.com for the second annual Customer Service Best Practices Survey, sponsored by Joe Turner Customer Service Consulting and wireless application service provider Corrigo. Last year's survey found that only 16 percent of those surveyed handled warranty service requests within 15 days, while 66 percent said they partially implemented such a program. Consultant Joe Turner advises builders to stick to a 15-day standard, lest their organizations slip beyond 30 days and face possible litigation.

DO YOU HAVE A TECH STORY?

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CoPilot Alert

Builder and software company develop integrated construction management software.

YET ANOTHER SOFTWARE COMPANY IS OFFERING an integrated system that promises to help builders manage construction more efficiently.

The company is iConnect of Reston, Va., and over the past three years, it has worked closely with Comstock Homebuilding Cos., also of Reston, in developing software called Builders CoPilot.

The CoPilot software, which sits on outsourced servers managed by iConnect, starts with a land management application and takes builders through customer care/warranty, but it does not include accounting. The software works with most standard accounting packages, though, including Microsoft Solomon, Oracle Financials, and Constructive Computing's Evolution Accounting, the program that Comstock uses.

Greg Benson, Comstock's COO, says the builder is working with iConnect because Comstock determined that none of the builder software available offers a single system that integrates all of the applications home builders require.

Benson says CoPilot includes applications for all

major home building functions, and each of the company's departments is granted access rights for the tasks it is responsible for.

Here's how it works: The land acquisition manager puts the lots into tables. Once the land is approved, the building department adds the lot addresses. The sales managers decide which lots are available to sell, and the production department runs the estimates, which are then available to the salespeople so that they can make up selection sheets. Purchasing then releases the work orders, which are posted on an extranet, and then the supers use the handheld scheduling application during the construction phase. Warranty service technicians also run a customer service application on a handheld.

For the end of the process, CoPilot has business intelligence software that allows builders to customize reports. **B**



ICONNECT THE DOTS: Builders CoPilot software has a business intelligence feature that lets builders easily mine data and develop customized reports.

Positive Track

A new service helps builders easily locate people and resources.

HOME BUILDERS RUNNING MULTIPLE PROJECTS in one geographic location always struggle with staffing their jobs properly and allocating equipment efficiently.

A new service from Santa Clara, Calif.-based TeleNav called TeleNav Track lets builders use Nextel phones with a built-in geographic positioning system (GPS) to track the locations of their supers and subs, as well as heavy equipment such as dump trucks.

John Hinton, CFO for De Mattei Construction in San Jose, Calif., says all of the company's 45 field employees are equipped with Nextel phones that have TeleNav Track built in. About a dozen of the employees—mostly project managers—use the

application on a Nextel BlackBerry. The phones send wireless GPS data back to six administrators who can view the precise location of a super or carpenter on a Web-based map.

"We might have an HVAC guy who needs some carpentry done to support his work, so the administrator can look up on the screen and find out who's closest and send them over to the site," says Hinton, who adds that the builder also uses the system to track project managers.

TeleNav Track also includes dispatching/scheduling, GPS navigation, barcode scanning (primarily for invoices), and a wireless forms application. A plan with all of those features costs \$21.99 a month. The company also offers an entry-level plan for \$9.99 that includes GPS tracking, reporting, and time-card tracking.

For more information on TeleNav Track, visit www.telenav.com.