

Builder

hanley wood

THE MAGAZINE OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF HOME BUILDERS

MAY 2006

TECHTOOLS

TECHNOLOGY FOR THE MODERN HOME BUILDER ■ EDITED BY STEVE ZURIER

Reflex Action

Canadian-based company offers smaller builders a complete software package.

SKEPTICS SAID IT COULDN'T BE DONE, but Reflex Software Solutions of Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, which is better known in the real estate market, has developed a complete construction management system for small to midsize home builders.

The software, called Reflex Homebuilder, starts with land management and takes builders through the entire construction process: sales, options management, estimating, scheduling, releasing work orders, customer care, and accounting. Builders can also take advantage of a Web portal to post construction schedules, purchase orders, and warranty information. Home buyers, subcontractors, and suppliers are given access rights based on the information the builder wants them to see.

Over the next 18 months, Reflex Software plans to market Reflex Homebuilder to companies that build 100 to 3,000 homes. The company's goal is to prove itself in the marketplace and eventually sell to the BUILDER 100.

Among the first home builders to run the software is Birchwood Properties of Calgary, Alberta, traditionally a multifamily builder, which plans to build 100 single-family and about 30 multifamily units this year.

Steve Joseph, the company's controller, says the builder paid \$50,000 to get Reflex Homebuilder up and running: roughly \$30,000 for the software itself, which included a five-user license, and another \$20,000 for implementation and training.

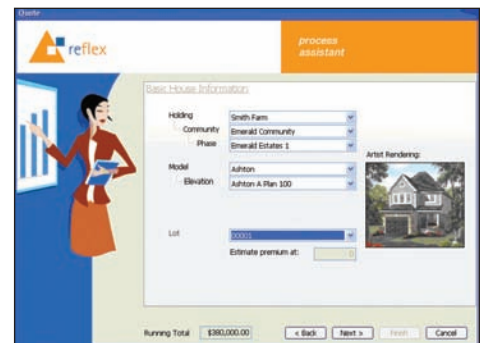
Joseph says that Birchwood started building single-family homes for the first time this year, so it needed a system that could handle single-family development. "The timing was right in that we didn't have any legacy problems in terms of a system that had to be replaced," says Joseph.

Reflex Homebuilder runs over a Microsoft SQL Server database and is based on Microsoft's .Net technology, which means that programmers can use the most up-to-date programming tools to write applications. The .Net technology lets programmers save time and money by developing new features and upgrades without having to roll out the entire application again and again.

One big advantage that .Net offers builders is a certain comfort level because Microsoft has a strong commitment to supporting the technology for several years. This is especially important to builders who have seen software companies come and go. Builders have been burned in the past, spending thousands, sometimes millions, of dollars on software that either no longer exists or is no longer fully supported.

Joseph says that Reflex Homebuilder's .Net base was one of the reasons the builder took a chance on being a beta tester. The company also liked the fact that Reflex Homebuilder has the look and feel of Microsoft Outlook, a familiar interface; also, Birchwood liked the software's process orientation.

Central to Reflex Homebuilder is PATI, which stands for Process Assistant and Training Instructor. PATI is essentially an interface that lets builders execute specific processes. There are roughly a dozen PATI processes in the initial release, with more to come. Among them are communicating change orders, releasing purchase orders, releasing warranty service orders, notifying schedule changes, and generat-



THE HELP YOU NEED: Reflex Homebuilder comes with at least a dozen process assistants that let builders integrate all the steps involved in everyday tasks such as building quotations, releasing work orders, and posting construction schedules.

ing quotes and sales contracts.

Here's how PATI would work for generating a purchase order: The builder would call up PATI and notify a trade contractor that he was awarded a bid. The notification could be posted on the Web or simply e-mailed. Assuming that the contractor accepts the job, an e-mail to that effect is sent back, and the builder then tells PATI to generate a purchase order. Once the purchase order is issued, all of the job cost commitments are created, the schedule is updated, a payment schedule is made, and all the transactions throughout the job are recorded in the accounting system.

Visit www.thereflex.com for more information. ■



Reflex Software Solutions
101-15023-123 Ave
Edmonton, AB T5V 1J7