

An Invitation, With Plenty of Notice

I'm writing this column on the plane as I return home from *Professional Builder's* second annual Housing Giants Leadership Conference because, first, I want to get my thoughts down on paper about the last three days while they're still fresh in my mind. And, second, because there was so much great information that came out of the event that I want to share with you.

For those of you who aren't familiar with the conference, it offers a wide variety of educational sessions for home builders, as well as plenty of opportunities for networking with peers. And although it's called the Housing Giants conference, the content at the event is applicable to any size builder. As we like to say, it's for builders that think big.

Our agenda this year touched on some of the most important issues that builders will face in the coming year along with some useful ways to deal with them. A panel of *PB's* Builders of the Year outlined tactics they use to appeal to Millennials, both as employees and as customers; discussed how they continue to use lessons learned from the downturn to keep their companies lean and forward-looking; and described how their companies' culture enables their teams to be more entrepreneurial, engaged, and productive. Another group, this year's National Housing Quality Award recipients, took the stage to tell us what it is about their companies that makes them among the best builders in the country.

KTGY Group's executive director, Nick Lehnert, offered an amazing look at cutting-edge design from around the country. As head of research and development, Nick possesses a wealth of knowledge about consumer and industry trends and he showed us where these trends will be taking home design for the next few years. Jane Meagher of the design studio consulting firm Success Strategies brought her passion for consumer purchase psychology and retail strategies to a presentation focused on increasing option sales as well as customer satisfaction. And Jimmy Diffie of The Bokka Group offered a deep dive into his company's proprietary research to show what the Gen-Y digital buying generation wants—and perhaps more importantly, doesn't

want—from the home buying experience.

A couple of sessions on the last day of the conference provided a great deal of insight into one of the most topical subjects for home builders: smart home technology. Keynoter David Rose, an instructor and researcher at the MIT Media Lab, presented a fascinating peek at the future of the Internet of Things and how these technologies will affect the ways we live and work.

Following David in the lineup were two builders with more practical applications for builders today. Bryan Flamm talked about going all in on smart home tech at Candlelight Homes in the Salt Lake City area. Candlelight offers its smart home package as standard in every home, and Bryan provided some compelling numbers as to how well that's working in his market. Dave Everson and Geoff



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Ferrell of Mandalay Homes were up next. Mandalay also offers home automation as standard, but as a net zero home builder, energy efficiency is of primary importance, so the HVAC system and a whole-house ERV are automated as well. Among other things, the integrated system actually reads outdoor temperatures to determine how best to operate and responds accordingly. How cool is that?

So why am I sharing this with you now, when the conference is behind us? Not to tell you what you missed, exactly, but rather what you will miss if you don't come to next year's event. If you think you may be interested in attending next October, watch for our invitations or send me an email and I'll make sure you're on our mailing list. And if you have an interest in sharing some innovative things you're doing, let me know that, too. I'm already planning the next event.

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