

What FAST Clients Say...



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Aggressive Adopters

\$6.3M Taylor-Morley in Chesterfield, Mo., assertively combines back-office, front office and in-home technologies in its production and custom divisions. *By Chris Anderson*

They're a bunch of FAST talkers at Taylor-Morley Inc., and with good reason. Since implementing the FAST Builder Management System software program to integrate its back-office functions three years ago, the St. Louis-area homebuilder has created an unbroken thread from the initial contact with prospective homebuyers to the management of the company's two-year warranty program.



In the process, Taylor-Morley has re-invented how it works with both its customers and the trades. That's no small task for a 50-year-old, \$6.3M builder with a couple of hundred employees, with 17 different communities under development and on track to complete more than 300 houses this year. Meanwhile, its three-year-old custom home division expects to complete as many as 15 high-end homes. But then again, it's never been a company content to stand still.

"We really pride ourselves on being cutting-edge and having differentiation," says Bill Taylor, chairman and chief executive officer. "As part of our total quality management we are always looking for ways of advancing technology, the quality of our construction and service after the sale."

The results have been eye-opening. Not only has the Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) software increased worker efficiency, but it has provided the additional benefits of stronger relationships with Taylor-Morley's subcon-

tractor/trade partners, increased the quality of the homes built, and provided continuous improvement in customer relations before, during, and after the sale.

Taylor-Morley's total integration of its back-office systems has provided many benefits, including improved operational efficiency, reduced redesign time from change orders, and the attraction of high-quality subcontractors because the homebuilder is able to pay its bills more quickly. The company's web site is the latest link to improved business-to-consumer contact.

FAST Cuts Design Time by 2 Weeks From the moment prospective customers first contact Taylor-Morley, their information is input into FAST and updated continually through the sales process. Salespeople in the field at each development can not only provide customers with pricing for the home design of their choice, but also provide on-the-spot pricing for the basic options. Further, custom modifications to any basic

home plan can be filtered back through FAST to Taylor-Morley's design department and estimating department and get customers an estimate on the feasibility and cost of the proposed changes, usually within a day. "That is one of the beauties of FAST," says Dan Hanley, information systems manager. "It allows us to maintain all the parts with pricing for each of the subdivisions under development. So now our estimators don't need to go outside the company to get the new estimate for changes, because most of the parts for those options are already loaded in the system."

To further leverage the nimble estimating process, Taylor-Morley recently added a Vertex **CAD system** that ties in with FAST. So where once more-significant design changes to home plans would require referral to an outside architect, most changes will now be completed in-house, eliminating the typical two-week turnaround.



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"We save on the expense of the architect and the time to turn it around," says Hanley. "Now if a customer wants a change, we work it up on the CAD system, placing the options exactly where the customer wants them in the design. The system will draw the new design, generate a new bill-of-material electronic file, and once it is imported into FAST, we can generate a new cost for that house ... in essence at the push of a button."

'Even Flow' Scheduling Uses Palm Pilots Once the house plans, colors, and the rest of the options are finalized, it's time to begin the construction schedule. Naturally, FAST contains all the scheduling information for each subdivision and continuously updates what tasks have been completed on individual houses. "When the salesperson writes the contract in the computer using our even-flow scheduling, he can tell the customers almost exactly when that house will be done and ready for closing," Morley says. "That makes their lives easier for scheduling the movers and selling their current home."

That same schedule also drives purchase orders for materials and scheduling of trade partners to do everything from pouring the foundation to finish carpentry. "Once that contract is ratified, the information moves into the hands of the construction team and purchasing," says Hanley. That means the system automatically prints all the purchase orders for mate-

rials and creates a step-by-step schedule of the home construction. Trade partners receive faxed copies of POs from purchasing detailing the materials needed, and construction sends the dates crews should be on hand to complete the work. "Now all our trade partners need to do is marry these two things up, and they can see exactly what they need to bring and when they should plan to complete the work," says Hanley.

On-site, construction managers spend much of their time walking through the homes making sure schedules are being met and inspecting the homes to ensure the work was done right. Using Palm Pilots, they make any changes needed to the schedule and approve purchase orders for payment. Each day, the information from each builder is uploaded from the Palm Pilot to the server via a cradle or hot synch. FAST, in turn, updates schedules and notifies accounting which purchase orders to pay.

Even when all the work is done on a new home, FAST doesn't stop working. Taylor-Morley also uses the system to help manage its two-year home-warranty program. Using web tablet PCs, the warranty manager can write service orders while in the customer's home instead of waiting to get back to the office.

FAST™ is the premier Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system and management tool for builders throughout North America.